WOMEN IN PURĀṆA TRADITION

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<u>PREFACE</u>

The value of Purāṇa tradition is largely due to its multiplex character. Under the process of upavṛṃhaṇa or augmentation it went ahead by retaining antiquated elements and incorporating postmarks to a lesser or larger degree. The evidence of Purāṇa tradition has its worth in the totality of its account. One single text of the Mahāpurāṇa group or of the Upapurāṇa group may not be of much use for portraying comprehensive picture of the socio-cultural development of the past. In fact historical elements accumulated in Purāṇa tradition is of the nature of Omnium-gatherum *gatherum* the trustworthiness of which can scarcely be held in doubt, though sometimes and in a few cases it has to be checked and cross-checked by the external evidences. In fact, the transmission of archaic tradition and incorporation of current changes in the customs and practices was a sacred legacy of Purāṇa-authorship. "It was a reconciled presentation of older tradition with the new institutional developments in the society". However, the fact can hardly be denied that the pressure of sectarian bias had such a dominant role in subsequent periods that the Purāṇa-authorship could not carry on its age-old

integrity in a number of cases. Consequently one finds it hard to justify the claim that "what is not seen in the Vedic tradition is all noticed in the Smṛti tradition and what is not seen in both is available in the Purāṇa tradition".

The word "tradition" actually means anything handed down from the past and so strongly rooted as to be as inviolable as laws; it implies the handing down of knowledge, beliefs and customs from one generation to another. The Purāṇa tradition may be defined as something which depicts a composite picture of the past and present. It seeks to adjust and re-adjust the ancient norms with the current developments.

The topic "women in Purāṇa tradition" aims to project the condition of women from early times to the early medieval and medieval periods of Indian History. So far, early and modern scholars including Altekar, Kane, S.A. Dange and many others have made only passing

The methodology of research and approach to the problems which I have adopted in my study is both vertical as well as horizontal. Analysis of one single Purāṇa text may not present before us what we may comfortably call "Purāṇic view". It can not enable us to present a synthetic picture of the actual state of affairs. Consequently, I have followed the horizontal method as well. It is only by combining the two methods together, that delineation of the position of women in historical perspective is possible. Besides, attempt has also been made for checking and cross-checking the Purāṇa-passages by external evidences as and when necessary.

It may be reiterated that the tradition demanded that the Purāṇic corpus should be re-edited with the changes in society so that its importance as work of authority should not decrease. "The task of re-editing was done by adding fresh chapters to the already existing ones and by writing new works bearing old titles. In this process some Purāṇa texts retained their early materials. some lost many of the earlier chapters which are replaced by others

of later dates and some became totally, new
works." Despite this unique feature of their
make-up the Purāṇa texts can be regarded as
reliable source books of socio-cultural study
of India's past and can well be utilized after
taking due precautions in surveying their passages
for the purpose of history.

Keeping in view the aforementioned
distinguishing features of Purāṇa-composition
and its utility for the reconstruction of socio-
cultural history, our study of the subject
covers the following heads :

(1) Purāṇa-tradition as Source of History :

Main issues of this chapter are as under;
emergence of "Purāṇa" and its subsequential
formation as a composite class of literature,
analysis of the logic in the hypothesis that
there was any parent or original "Purāṇa-saṁhitā,"
traditional number of Purāṇas-eighteen or nineteen
can Śiva Purāṇa be included in the list, original
ingredients of Purāṇa, role of Sūta-institution
in the development of Purāṇa-tradition, motive
and meaning of "pañcalakshaṇa", transformation
of "pañcalakshaṇa" into "daśalakshaṇa" probably

under sectarian pressure of a later period, impact of Puraṇa-tradition on dharmaśāstric tradition - on the two Great Epics - on the Smṛiti commentaries of the early medieval period; analysis of the question as to whether Smṛiti-matters in the Purāṇas were borrowed from Smṛiti-texts or from a common source, analysis of the question as to whether in respect of similar issues preference was given to Purāṇa - version or to Smṛiti-version, recognition of authoritative character of Purāṇas in Philosophical tradition, Purāṇa-tradition in Kathā-works; multiplex character of the Purāṇas and their usefulness in understanding and reconstructing the socio-cultural and political history, historical elements accumulated in Purāṇa-tradition being of the nature of omnium-gatherum - often reliable, but sometimes distorted and hence checking and cross-checking is necessary.

(2)   **Position of girls** :

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to be equal to ten sons; evaluation of Purāṇic reference to putrī explaining it on the lines of definition of putra - one who saves his or her parents from hell; Purāṇic evidence on the fallacy of the view that female infaticide was practised in ancient India; Purāṇic references to the types and categories of girls like Nagnikā, Vrishalī, Visha-kanyā, etc; categories of slave girls and their gifts to illustrious personages and temples; evaluation of Purāṇic evidence on daughter's right to paternal property; implication of Purāṇic references to the honouring of Virgin girls on festive occassions; evaluation of Purāṇic evidence on education of girls - references to the brahmavādinī (life-long student of theology) and sadyodvāhā (student till performance of marriage); assessment of Purāṇic data on proficiency of girls in fine art.

(3) **Marriage** : Evaluation of the hypothesis that there are traces of promiscuity in some passages of Mahābhārata in the light of Purāṇic references to promiscuity or indiscriminate mingling and free sexual relations affecting adversely the well established order of the society during the Kali age; marriage a social

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no mother, nor wife nor a prostitute should
go to the forest; that beautiful girls should

be purchased for their dedication to temples, that best way to win Suryaloka is to dedicate a bevy of prostitutes to a solar temple.

(B) **Purda-system** : Assessment of the hypothesis that Purda-system did not exist in the Vedic age, that some kind of Purda was observed in certain royal families during the epic-pauranic period; that by about 200 A.D. some royal families were beginning to think that their ladies should be seen only by the select few, that they should put on a veil when moving in public, an Puranic view of the observation that the general adoption of the Purda-system by the ruling and aristocratic families is subsequent to the Muslim rule; assessment of antiquated Puranic references to the non-prevalence of Purda-system, in chronological context; illustrations of the enlightened maidens like Uma, Mena, Dharini, Bhvana, Aparna, Ekaparna and Ekapatala etc who could not have cultivated proficiency in different branches of knowledge, metaphysical as well as practical in seclusion and ~~avya~~ away from the fore of the outwordly environment; assessment of Puranic reference to the ladies who were in a helpless condition would often avoid going out in public, proshita-patika

is a glowing instance; would it be possible
to argue that Purāṇic references to the observance
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that even in royal families it did not find
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height in India than anywhere else; that the
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Before closing the prefatory notes and comments, it is my pleasant duty to express my obligations to all those who have helped me in one way or the other in preparing this dissertation. I am much beholden to all my predecessors in the field whose works I have consulted with benefit. In fact, the very edifice of the present study has been largely built on their foundation. I am extremely grateful to all my teachers in the Department of Ancient

History, Culture and Archaeology, University of Allahabad; who created in me an interest in Indological studies. I should like, in particular to express my deepest gratitude to Prof. B.N.S. Yadava for his erudite guidance and sympathetic help throughout the preparation of this work. Finally, I am much indebted to the authorities of the Indian Council of Historical Research for granting me a Junior Research Fellowship and thus enabling me to go ahead in completing this work free from any financial hurdle.

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PURĀNA–TRADITION AS SOURCE OF HISTORY

The term "Purāṇa-tradition" has no final and absolute meaning. It is a relative term. It covers a number of aspects. It may include Vedic tradition, non-Vedic tradition, ante-Vedic tradition or even pre-Vedic tradition. These aspects and various others of the kind relating to historical value, origin and development of Purāṇa tradition have been exercising the minds of the indlogists since the eighties of the eighteenth century when Sir William Jones for the first time pointed out the historical value of the Purāṇas and its inclusion among the desiderata of oriental studies. It was realized that emergence of "Purāṇa" and its formation as a composite class of literature are two distantly located but integral parts of one and the same tradition. Emergence of Purāṇa can be traced to a much earlier period, while its textual formation points to a subsequent stage. In this context, certain references of Ṛigveda have been taken into account. In no less than three hymns of Ṛigveda, there is reference to the term 'Purāṇa',[1] which, however, does not allude to Purāṇa tradition. The term in the context conveys the sense of antiquity. Similarly, occurrence of the term "Purāṇa gāthā"[2] has nothing to do with Purāṇa-tradition. It can be taken in the sense of archaic status of gāthā. Some of the gāthās quoted in the Ṛigveda may

be pre-Vedic. As regards the other Vedic texts Kane
and Hazra have drawn our attention to two hymns of
Atharvaveda which make allusion to Purāṇa (in the
singular).[3] It is narrated in the passages under
reference that "the ṛik and sāman verses, the chandas,
the Purāṇa along with the Yajus formulae sprang from
the remainder of sacrificial food".[4] The second hymn
alludes to the knower of Purāṇa (purāṇavit) who
is capable of observing the non-existent phenomenon.[5]
Gopatha Brāhmaṇa recognises Purāṇa as one of the
vedāṅgas alongwith upnishads, kalpa etc.[6] It also
refers to Purāṇaveda and Itihāsaveda.[7] It may be
that by the time of Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, Purāṇa and
Itihāsa had established their separate entities and
were considered distinct from each other.[8] However,
one can not be definite about the above possibility.
Thus Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to Purāṇa both
independently as well as in association with Itihāsa.[9]
Āśvalāyana Gṛihya Sūtra, a later Vedic text explicitly
refers to the study and recitation of Purāṇa.
Winternitz rightly observes that, Purāṇa was the
generic term for the Ākhyānas scattered in the Vedic
texts, some of which are reproduced in the extant
texts of the Purāṇas.[10] It is quite probable that
these Ākhyānas were collated and rearranged by the
later authors, and Purāṇa as a separate class of
literature emerged out of it.

The general appeal of the Purāṇa tradition
either to the common mass or to the elite was not
possible unless, otherwise the Purāṇas were given
text form. The present task seems to have been
completed by the time of the early Dharmasūtras.
Thus the Gautama Dharma Sūtra, the oldest Dharmasūtra
assignable to circa 600 B.C. recognises the
authenticity of the Purāṇas along with the Vedas
and Vedāṅgas.[11] The reference reveals that, by this
period the Purana tradition was no longer confined
to memory, it was subjected to writing. However,
it is difficult to ascertain as to whether the
Dharmasūtra refers here to some original Purāṇa-
composition or to the group of Purāṇa-compositions.
It may also be possible to argue that the authenticity
of Purāṇas was recognized in legal matters, because
the later Dharmasūtras allude to similar practice.
Unless we believe that Purāṇa tradition was shifted
from memory to writing, it can not be thought of
their having been taken as authentic works in legal
matters. The evidence of Āpastamba Dharasūtra seems
to be more relevant on this point. It quotes three
passages, two of which are said to be related to
some Purāṇas. Names of these Purāṇas are however, not
mentioned. The source of the third one is said to
be Bhavishya Purāṇa.[12] It may be that the afore-
mentioned citations existed in the original texts

and were left out later in the recompilation stage.
Hazra is fully justified in stating that more Purāṇas
than one had come into existence long before the
beginning of the Christian era, and the number of
the Purāṇas had begun to be multiplied even before
the time of Āpastamba.[13] However, we will not be
on the erring side in suggesting that regional
variations and sectarian prejudices had probably
crept into the original kernel of Purāṇa literature
during the periods when it was yet to assume the
form of a separate class of compilation. THis could
be the only possible factor playing a significant
role in the emergence of more than one text at the
stage when the Purana was shifted from memory to writing.

Since the pioneer stage of Purāṇic researches,
spate of publications have come to the fore relating
to the problem of existence of parent Purāṇa-saṁhitā.
Jackson and a few more scholars advocated that there
was only one Purāṇa in the beginning.[14] In support
of this theory the following points were brought
forward: employment of the word Purāṇa in singular
in the passages of Atharvaveda; identify of language
in the dynastic list of the Purāṇas; and the
traditional account of there being one single Purāṇa
in the beginning. This possibility has been ruled

out by Winternitz.[15] Hazra,[16] and Pusalkar[17] on reasonable grounds. We may suggest here that the term Purāna employed in sigulär number in some texts is capable of coveying only two possible meanings. It has reference either to ancient myth or it may also signify the compiled status of the Purāna literature. The actual state of affairs is possibly brought out by the evidence of two Vedic texts, namely, the Gopatha Brāhmana and the Taittirīya Āranyaka. In the former text, the word Purāna is used in plural number and is associated with word Veda.[18] The latter text mentions the term Purāna without any associate word.[19] It is thus evident that although an original Purāna- samhitā could prove to be the parent type of the texts belonging to this class, yet the possibility of its existence is hardly brought out by the evidences explored so far.

The theory of existence of one original Purāna samhitā may not be accepted. But, tne question remains as to whether we can suggest any clue to fix the number of the original Purānas. To some extent Winternitz has possibly suggested a plausible clue in this regard. He has made a special note of a Vishnu Purīna's verse which alludes to four original Purānas without specifying their names. The said verse relates

that these four Purāṇas were composed by Romaharshaṇa, the well known Sūta of Purāṇa tradition and his three distinguished disciples. But, the noted scholar does not take the authenticity as final, for want of any reliable information.[20] However, we can not ignore the value of the verse in postulating that originally the number was four at the stage of first collation and text formation. Almost in the same tune Vāyu Purāṇa alludes to the composition of ten original Purāṇas without mentioning their names. It is not improbable that the passage of Vāyu Purāṇa under reference points to that stage of Purāṇa compilation, when the number was raised from four to ten. According to Haraprasad Sastri in the only genuine portion of Vāyu Purāṇa, the number of Purāṇas is given as ten, so that this represents the next stage in the development of the Purāṇas when their number was raised from four as given in the Vishṇu Purāṇa, to ten. He further states that the traditional number eighteen is the final stage.[21] Pargiter observes that the ultimate number of the Purāṇas had been increased to nineteen because Śiva Purāṇa is also enlisted in some Purāṇa texts. As far the number nineteen and inclusion of Śiva Purāṇa in a few lists, it is significant to note that reference to Śiva Purāṇa is made nowhere in the common list of the Purāṇas,

Śiva Purana is one of the leading Upa-Purāṇas. Generally speaking it was never recognised as Mahāpurāṇa. It has been rightly observed that, its status was raised by the Śaiva sectaries, who inverdently inserted its name in the old list.[23] The earliest reference to Śiva Purāṇa is found in the account of Alberuni,[24] and by that time the Purāṇas had detracted the early tradition. The Purāṇas which enlist the Śiva Purāṇa make no reference to Vāyu Purāṇa. It has been observed that the Vāyu Purāṇa was subjected to revision at later stages to such an extent that in a number of its passages it gives the look of a sectarian Purāṇa of Śaivite school.[25] This evident factor may be accounted for its replacement by Śiva Purāṇa in some of the Purāṇic lists.

It has been shown that number eighteen was a deliberate selection owing to the Sāṅkhya-oriented elements contained in the Purāṇas; the original purāṇa-passages deal with the theory of creation, while according to the theory of Sāṅkhya philosophy the created elements are eighteen in number.[26] One finds it hard to agree with this suggestion in view of the fact that the fixation of number of Purāṇas is a later phenomenon, when the Purāṇas had lost their

appeal in regard to the original elements of which
creation theory was an integral part. In fact, no
precise explanation can be attributed to this problem.
It can only be suggested that the eighteen textual
number of the Purāṇas, eighteen chapter - division
of Bhagavadgītā and eitheen parva-division of
Mahābhārata was motivated by identical tradition
in each case. In Chapter 53 of Matsya Purāṇa there
is distinct reference to number eighteen of the Purāṇas
Hazra places the date of composition of this chapter
between 550 A.D. and 650 A.D.[27] Number of Purāṇas
may have been fixed near about this period.

     In the present context Kane examines a passage
of Vishṇu Purāṇa (III. 6.21-23) which enumerates
the number of Purāṇas as eighteen. He also draws
our attention to the account of Alberuni, who in
his work on India (Composed in 1030 A.D.) sets out
one list of Purāṇas as read out to him from Vishṇu
Purāṇa. This shows, according to Kane, "that the
list of 18 principal Purāṇas had been completed long
before 1000 A.D.[28]

     One may be tempted to suggest that the original
title Bhārata was transformed into Mahābhārata, Kāvya
into Mahākāvya and Purāṇa into Mahāpurāṇa under

identical traditional pressure. For the age of
transformation of the term Purāṇa into Mahāpurāṇa
clue is provided by Daṇḍin, who in his Kāvyādarśa
has made pointed reference to Mahākāvya and has also
discussed its salient features in clear terms. The
age of Daṇḍin can not be fixed later than 800 A.D.
but in no case earlier than 500 A.D.[29] Hence roughly
speaking 7th century A.D. may be treated as the period
when the term Mahāpurāṇa had become quite common
and the Purāṇa-number had been finally fixed.

It would be worthwhile to analyse the genesis
of the Purāṇa literature in order to have an idea
of the factors contributing to the development of
the Purāṇa tradition. In early stages the term Purāṇa
was nothing more than a synonym of ākhyāna. Generally
speaking Purāṇa had no distinct status and it was
supposed to be only a part of the Vedas. The collection
and incorporation of the ākhyānas activated the process
of formation of Purāṇa as a separate class of treatise.
Precise definition of the Purāṇic akhyānas is sometimes
taken into account. It has been pointed out that
the commentary of Śrīdhara is the leading authority
on the definition of ākhyāna.[30] The commentary quotes
a verse, which is supposed to be old. The verse relates
that ākhyāna means dṛishtārthakathana. In view of

this, it has been shown that ākhyāna points to what
has been observed or what has been experienced. It
is thus evident that ākhyānas were not without meaning
or motive. Their development owed largely to the
experience of the traditional authors of the Purāṇas
and they were applied to the suitability of the later
changes in the society.

The tradition to treat the ākhyāna as a separate
entity had not altogether Vainished even after its
becoming part of Purāṇa. In this connection a verse
of Manusmṛiti is cited. It mentions svādhyāya,
dharmaśāstra, itihāsa, ākhyāna and purāṇa distinct
from each other. Their recitation is said to be
efficacious ān the occasion of Śrāddha. This shows
that ākhyāna had maintained its independent status
and was supposed to be as significant as Purāṇa.[31]
It is significant that in the available texts of
the Purāṇas, there are a number of such ākhyānas
which evince their separate entity at the original
stage, but were incorporated into the Purāṇas for
the sake of authenticity and popular appeal. Sometimes
the same ākhyāna occurs twice in one and the same
Purāṇa in two different contexts. Attention may be
drawn here to Jāmadagnya-ākhyāna and Bharata-ākhyāna
occurring respectively in Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa and Vishṇu

Purāṇa. In one context their account is nothing more than a summary as compared to the context which elaborates them at full length.[32] In the context of their elaborate form they create the impression of an independent account without being connected with the Purāṇa texts.

Itihāsa was yet another ingredient which was brought within the framework of Purāṇa-compilation. Vedic passages reveal that Purāṇa and itihāsa were treated as co-extensive. But the meaning of itihāsa is hard to be explained on the basis of the Vedic passagese. Geldner suggests that there must have been existing Purāṇaveda and Itihāsaveda in the Vedic period.[33] Winternitz does not agree with this suggestion. According to him in these contexts the terms Itihāsaveda and Purāṇaveda do not have any reference to separate Books. References to these terms can only show Itihāsa and Purāṇa were recognised as subjects of study.[34] A.S. Gupta draws our attention to a passage of Gopatha Brāhmaṇa which refers to Sarpaveda, Piśācaveda, Asurveda, Itihāsaveda and Purāṇaveda separately. In the said passage these five vedas are mentioned as source of five separate Mahāvritis. Thus, they may be taken as five separate works.[35] But the passage can be interpreted from a

more suitable angle. It can be taken only in the
sense of popularity of itihāsa, purāṇa and other
three terms. It can hardly mean composition of five
separate works. The word veda suffixed to these terms
can only mean knowledge or subject of study. In such
contexts, where separate or composite works are
intended, one should expect suffix saṁhitā instead
of veda. In fact Purāṇa and Itihāsa were supposed
to be of equal merit. The well known evidence of
Chhāndogya upanishad makes it evident that although
Itihāsa and Purāṇa did not exist as separate works,
yet they were taken in the sense of subjects of
distinguished merit and their combined form was
designated as Veda.[36] It appears that the subject
matter of the recognized vedas and Vedāṅgas was
considerably comprehensive. The duration of their
composition must have covered a long span of time.
Consequently, the exact form of Itihāsa and Purāṇa
was dependent upon the post-Vedic trends. Taking
into account some Purāṇic and non-Purāṇic evidences,
Upadhyaya rightly concludes that the demarcation
line between Itihāsa and Purāṇa was quite indistinct
in early times and difference between the two could
be cleared off only in later times.[37]

       In later periods Śaṅkara and Sāyaṇa have
attempted to explain the two terms in their

commentaries on the passages of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. These passages allude to the ākhyāna of Urvaśi and Purūravā; description of Srishṭiprakriyā also occurs in them, Śaṅkara comments that the former is subject of itihāsa, while the latter one is said to be related to Purāṇa. Position is entirely reversed in the commentary of Sāyaṇa, the former figures for the term Purāṇa and the latter is called itihāsa.[38] It may be that the commentary of Śaṅkara is nearer to the truth. Srishṭiprakriyā was the first and well established characteristic of Purāṇa (pañcalakshaṇa) and hence it could hardly come under the scope of itihāsa. The account of Urvaśi and Purūravā has the touch of legend and thus it could fulfil the definition of an ākhyāna. This analysis is also insufficient to solve the problem. It is not improbable that the term itivṛitta, which occurs in the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya is the same as the itihāsa of the above texts.[39] It may be suggested that itihāsa was a synonymous term for ākhyāna because of its indication to some event, without having any consideration for the reality or otherwise nature of the narrative mentioned in it. Pargiter has rightly observed that, in the Purāṇa passages the term itihāsa has been used without any definite meaning. It denotes general statement, special statement, kings and description

of gods in the various contexts of the passages,
sometimes it is also used simply in the sense of
a legend.[40]

Kalpa was yet another integral part of the
genesis of Purāṇa-text; which is sometimes replaced
by the terms kalpajokti or kalpaśuddhi. Generally
speaking the term kalpa was included in the vedāṅga
and its knowledge was supposed to be efficacious
for the applicability of the Vedic rites. Sāyaṇa
explains the term according to its etymological meaning
and observes that kalpa was so known because it was
instrumental in the performance of the Vedic
sacrifices. It would be possible to argue that, since
the word had antique colour in it, the Purāṇa authors
adopted it in their composition. It has been suggested
that the term may be taken in the sense of periodical
events. Such terms as purātana-kalpa and purākalpavid
occurring in the Purāṇa-passages may denote old stories
and the persons who are well-versed in narrating
such old stories.[41] It may be that the term kalpa
was used in the Purāṇa-compositions in order to insure
stamp of earliness to the passages compiled in them
from time to time. During the periods when new socio-
cultural trends were incorporated into the Purāṇa-
passages, the word kalpa was added to these passages
with deliberate intention. The word kalpa,

purātanakalpa and many others of the kind must have
contributed to the authoritative character of the
passages with which they were associated.

Another element of the genesis of the Purāṇa-
compilation was gāthā. It helped expanding the Purāṇa-
bulk and giving them colour of authoritative works.
There is identity of style in the genus of the gāthās
available in the Vedic and Purāṇic texts. Thus the
Brāhmaṇas are composed in prose and have a reference
to ākhyānas in most of their sections. In these texts
gāthās in versified form are quoted in the midst
of such ākhyānas with a view to giving authoritative
colour to their descriptions.[42] In Purāṇa-passages
gāthās occur in quotation forms. Regarding the
distinguishing form of the gāthās, Winternitz rightly
observes that they were intended to describe the
heroic deeds of some great personality and very often
the descriptive ākhyānas were summed up through their
medium.[43]

An original ingredient of the Purāṇa-text
was upākhyana. As pointed out earlier the traditional
commentator of the Purāṇas, Śrīdhara explained that
the event which is actually observed or experienced
is ākhyāna. In the same continuation the commentator
states that the event which has been heard by the

author is upākhyāna (śrutasya kathanamupākhyānaम्म pracakshate). It has also been shown that ākhyāna or upākhyāna are so known because of their comprehensive or concise nature (mahadalpavyavasthayā). The former explanation seems plausible. For, even some lengthy narratives like those of Rāma, Naciketā and Yayāti are mentioned under the titles Rāmopakhyāna, Naciketopākhyāna and Yayatyūpakhyāna.

It may be pointed out that the above ingredients existed in earlier periods either in developed or less developed forms. These matters had not been collated in a coherent form for long period and were awaiting compilation as a separate class of literature for which the word Purāṇa was the most appropriate name. An indication to the above effect is given by a Purāṇa verse running as under "ākhyānaiscupakhyā-nairgāthābhih kalpaśuddhibhih purāṇasaṁhitāñcakre purāṇārthavisāaradaḥ" (Vishṇu Purāṇa, III. 6.15, Vāyu Purāṇa, 60.21; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa II. 3.31). It will not be safe to state that the reference is here to the original or parent Purāṇa Saṁhitā.[44] It has been rightly pointed out that the possibility of one original Purāṇa - saṁhitā can not be postulated in the same way as the possibility of one original Vedₐ-saṁhitā; the existence of which is extremely

doubtful.[45] In all probability, the reference is
to the process of compilation which played a
significant role in collating and arranging the matters
specified in the verse.

The compilation of Purāṇas, atleast in early
stages was largely due to the class of narrators
designated in the Purāṇa-text as Sūta. Traditions
vary regarding the origin and functions of the Sūtas.
In early Purāṇa tradition they are styled as Paurāṇika
Sūta, But in the later traditin they figure as
Pratiloma Sūta or Māgadha. Reasonably speaking there
was a sharp distinction between these two classes
of Sūtas. The Paurāṇika Sūta enjoyed a respectful
position in the society. His versions were quoted
to authenticate the Purāṇa passages especially in
connection with the Vaṁśa and vaṁśānucarita sections.
For this reasons some high sounding epithets such
as vaṁśa-kuśala, dhīmāna and kritabuddhi were applied
to him. Pratiloma Sūta belonged to the mixed caste
originating from Kshatriya father and Brāhmaṇa
mother.[45A] Taking into the evidence of Arthaśāstra
of Kauṭilya, Kane opines chat in the days of Kauṭilya
Sūta and Māgadha were pratiloma castes, but the Sūta
and Māgadha mentioned as the first reciters of the
Purāṇas are a category apart, that they do not belong

to pratiloma castes and are both distinguished from
brahmanas and kshatriyas[46] (⬛⬛⬛ ⬛⬛ ⬛⬛), V.S. Pathak
holds that Sūta was regarded as a venerable sage.
This institution was connected with Bringvāṅgiras
brāhmaṇas who were responsible for the development
of historical tradition in ancient India.[47]

From what has been said above it follows that,
(a) beginning of Purāṇa-compilation was marked by
the collation of four ingredients, namely; ākhyāna,
upākhyāna, gāthā and kalpa (also known as kalpaśuddhi
or kalpajokti); (b) The task of collation was done
by Sūta, who was considered to be a venerable sage;
(c) the expression "purāṇa-saṁhitā" does not point
to any particular text, it points to a particular
style adopted by the original bearers (the Sūta)
of the Purāṇa tradition; (d) the original four
ingredients which are thus found in the Purāṇas are
pre-Purāṇic matters, they were incorporated into
Purāṇas with a view to giving antiquarian colour
to the passagese and to justifying the significance
of the word Purāṇa.

It is significant to note that, it was Pargiter
who pointed out for the first time that the five
characteristics (specified in the pañcalakshaṇa)

were the earliest subject matters of the Purāṇas.[48]
The point which is of special note in this context
is that, although the number five in respect of
characteristic features had been fixed, yet there
was no unanimity with reference to the subject matter.
Thus a Purāṇic description alludes to bhūmismsthāna
(i.e. description of bhuvanakoṣa) and makes it the
fifth characteristic. The expression Vaṃśānucarita
is dropped out in the said definition.[49] This may
probably point to the antiquity of bhuvanakoṣa material
available in the Purāṇa-texts. Rajeshwar Drāviḍ has
drawn our attention to another pañcalakshaṇa definition
of the Purāṇas, reference to which is made in the
Jayamaṅgalā commentary of Kauṭilya's Aṛthaṣāstra.
The commentator points out that this definition comes
from an early composition. The five characteristics
enumerated in this definition are as under; creation,
cotinuation, destruction, dharma and moksha[50] also.
It is, however, not improbable that the reference
of the commentary has its relation to that period
when the non-sectarian early character of the Purāṇas
had considerably changed and they had come in the
category of religious and moral codes. The Purāṇa-
texts themselves offer ample evidence to the effect
that the age-old pañcalakshaṇa definition was put
to severe modification in which the religious bias

of the Purāṇa-authors played a significant role. Thus a passage of Vishṇu Purāṇa relates that the five characteristics of the Purāṇas are aimed at the glorification of god Vishṇu.[51] Similarly a passage of Matsya Purāṇa relates that the five characteristics of the Purāṇas are aimed at illustrating the supremacy of Brahmā, Vishṇu, Sūrya and Rudra.[52] There is reference to daśalakshaṇa of the Purāṇas in the 12th skandha of the Bhāgavat. The text adds that the number five or ten emerges out of smaller or larger planning of a particular Purāṇa-text. Pusalkar feels that by "smaller planning" Upa-Purāṇas are intended.[53] It may, however, be pointed out that the indication of the Bhāgavata passage is towards the Purāṇa-technique which required the retainment of the old material alongside the addition of new material in response to the current socio-religious norms. THus another passage of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa lays down that the Purāṇa-characteristics are determined in accordance with śruti and artha.[54] The words śruti and artha can only denote that the upholders of the Purāṇa school adhered to the early tradition without discarding the modes and customs of the current periods, since they were too popular to be neglected. As far the Upa-Purāṇas, the evidences at our disposal do not admit of any such logic that these texts had

any "smaller planning." Traditionally, these texts
are regarded as the "khila" or supplement of the
Purāṇas, but in general practice the position seems
to be quite different.[55] It has been rightly observed
that from the point of view of their bulk and volume,
incorporation of varied types of material and
recognition as a class of literary pieces, the
significance of Upa-Purāṇas was by no means inferior
to the Purāṇas.[56] After the group of eighteen principal
Purāṇas had been compiled, many sub-systems and sects
like the Śāktas and Sauras came into prominence
and their adherents interpolated chapters in the
established Purāṇas and wrote new and independent
Purāṇic works styled as "Purāṇa" in order to propagate
new ideas and some of these latter came to be called
Upa-Purāṇa.[57]

It appears that, by 5th - 4th centuries B.C.,
the Purāṇas had made their mark in the Dharmaśāstra
tradition. Thus the Gautama Dharmasūtra refers to
the person who is expert in Purāṇa and is also
conversant with Veda, Vedāṅga, Vākovākya, itihāsa
etc.[58] The Āpastamba Dharmasūtra notices two verses
of some Purāṇa without specifying the name of the
text.[59]

Impact of Purāṇa tradition was also experienced by the two great epics, namely, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. The former text employs the term Purāṇavit to a person who was held in high esteem because of his knowledge of Purāṇas.[59A] Sumantra is styled as Sūta, who is said to have related to Daśaratha the past events described in the texts of the Purāṇas.[59B] In the text of Mahābhārata, there are some interesting passages throwing light on the impact of Purāṇa tradition during the period of compilation of the Great Epic. In one of its passages occurring in the ādiparva, it relates that Vyāsa composed the eighteen Purāṇas first and subsequently he composed the Mahābhārata. This passage may be an interpolation, incorporated in the text under the process of what is known in the Epic-purāṇa tradition as Upavṛṁhaṇa; it required addition of new passages in response to the current socio-religious changes. Still more significant is the verse occurring in the Vanaparva. It refers to the authenticity Vāyu Purāṇa for the knowledge of the past and future events.[60]

Authenticity of Purāṇa tradition may also be visualized in the light of Smṛti tradition. Hazra shows that Smṛti chapters were added in the Purāṇas at a later stage.[61] However, the evidence of Kādambarī

shows that during the age of Bāṇabhaṭṭa, i.e. 7th
century A.D. Purāṇa along with Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata
was treated as Dharmaśāstra (āgameshu sarveshu Purāṇa-
Rāmāyaṇa-Mahābhārata). This shows that the Smṛiti
chapters were incorporated in the Purāṇas around
7th century A.D.

Development of Purāṇa tradition during the
early medieval period can also be assessed in the
light of Smṛiti-commentaries. We may analyse here
Medhātithi's commentary on Manusmṛiti. In his
commentary Medhātithi quotes certain verses, the
source of which are said to be the Purāṇas.[61] Names
of Purāṇas, however, are not specified. The Purāṇa-
verses quoted by Medhātithi are characterised by
two significant features. In the first place these
verses occur mostly with reference to the passages
on creation and recreation of the universe. Secondly,
some of these verses claim their association with
Smṛiti texts. Hazra rightly shows that in the ancient
Purāṇas, the original forms or the counterforms of
these verses can well be found to some extent.[62]
The evidence of Medhātithi also reveals that even
in the later stages the distinguishing feature of
Purāṇa-composition was recognised in respect of its
early matters including sarga (creation) and pratisarga
(recreation), the first two elements of pañcalakṣaṇa-

definition. The evidence also reveals that the pañcalakshana was going into disuse, and Purāṇas were considered·to be akin to Smṛiti-texts.

So far the scholars have not paid due attention to answering the question as to whether Smṛiti-matters in the Purāṇas are borrowed from the Smṛiti-texts or from a common tradition to which the composed matters of the Smṛiti-texts are also due. A passage occurring in the Hārita Samhitā is of some use.[63] Hārita assigns equal importance to the Smṛitis and the Purāṇas for deciding the days and occasions prohibited for study. On the other hand Vijñāneśvara makes pointed reference to prāyascitta detailed in the Hārita-Samhitā and suggests its indebtedness to Purāṇas.[64] It is thus ·evident· that, ·for their Smṛiti-matters Purāṇas owe not so much to the Smṛiti-texts as to the source material of a common tradition.

Question has been raised as to whether in respect of similar issue preference was given to Smṛiti tradition or Purāṇa tradition. IN this context J.D.M. Derrett quotes a passage from Aparārka, which refers to the preference of Purāṇa-version over Smṛiti in case of textual disagreement.[65] Hazra observes that some difference between the two traditions can

be marked in the early stagese. But the later
Nibandhakāras attached equal importance to both these
traditions.[66] If the latter suggestion is accepted,
it will follow that the early disagreement between
the two traditions culd not continue in later times.

The Purāṇa tradition also kept its door open
to incorporate Vyavahāra passagese during the early
mediaeval and medieval periods. These passages were
added in the Purāṇa-texts without any reference to
a consistent plan. In some texts they give the
impression of huge mass of collections outnumbering
their counterparts preserved in other ones. Even
in early Purāṇas the original account seems to have
been replaced by these later additions to the extent
that the concerned Purāṇa-texts have lost their
original character. Due to these omissions, it becomes
difficult to use these text for the kind of information
originally intended in them. In this connection Derrett
has attached much value to Matsya Purāṇa for Vyavahāra
passages contained in it.[63] However, we should not
overlook the fact that the text of Matsya Purāṇa
has suffered the greatest loss consequent upon the
process of commission and omission of passagese.
This is the result of the well-known Purāṇic device
called upavṛṁhaṇa or samupavṛṁhaṇa, which was

operative in Purāṇa compilation from the very beginning. Adhering to this device the Purāṇa-authors in many cases have not cared for preserving the original passages, while adding the new ones with a view to making the account uptodate. It is significant to note that the textual integrity of the Purāṇa text was not hard to be maintained despite upavṛṁhaṇa. We may illustrate here the example of Vishṇu Purāṇa. The early character of the present text is beyond doubt. Like Matsya Purāṇa, this text too was used by the later compilers for incorporating in it the Vyavahāra passages. The addition has not caused any major dislocation or loss of the original passages, which are intact in the text to a satisfactory extent. We may not raise any objection against the observations of Hazra[68] and Derrett[69] that quotations from Matsya Purāṇa overcrowd the lines of the Nibandhakāras. In respect of Vishṇu Purāṇa, on the other hand, such cases are a few. It may be reiterated that while the original pañcalakshaṇa style was adopted for fixing the scope of Purāṇa-composition the archaistic style of upavṛṁhaṇa was aimed at the incorporation of matters to meet the challenges of new socio-religious elements of the current circumstances.

Ancient Indian Philosophical tradition also felt the impact of Purāṇa tradition. Thus in his Tancravārttiḷa Kumārila recognizes the evidence of Purāṇas explaining the causes of decline of dharma in the Kali age (smaryante ca purāṇeshu dharma-vipluti-........h, 1, 3, 7). In this context Kumārila makes ...., which is of special note.

.... In all likelihood, is towards .... that the old tradition which had its emphasis on memorising the Purāṇas even in the age when these texts had already been committed to writing. Kumārila ... ... that decline of dharma in kali is .... Buddha and others and adds that no body ... ... attention to their teachings. It has been .... that in the Purāṇas to which Kumārila has ...., Buddha has been badly condemned.[70] This observation may be partly true in view of Kumārila's .... on the Purāṇa tradition speaking of .... in the Kali age owing to Buddhism .. .. the ...... and the fact has been ..... and here that the Purāṇic reference cited by Kumārila is missing from the extant texts of the Purāṇas. Perhaps for this obvious reason Kumārila uses the term smaryante instead of any such terms which may point to the availability of the reference in the preserved passages of the Purāṇas. An intensive

survey of the Purāṇa texts tends to bring out that
the Purāṇas have accorded a just sense of honour
to Buddha. In ~~these~~ texts Buddha is regarded
as the Māyāmoha incarnation of Vishṇu, who succeeded
in destroying the adversaries of the Vedic tradition
through his supernatural deluding power. The passage
of Tantravarttika has probably its reference to the
early stage of Purāṇa tradition, when Buddhism was
in the heyday of its life and was not in consonance
with the brahmanical tradition. The passages which
are now available in the Purāṇa-texts point to the
stage of its decline. A survey of Purāṇa passages
reveals that, at this later stage attempt was made
by the Pauraṇikas to assimilate Buddhism in the
brahmanical tradition. In another passage of
Tantravārttika, reference is made to the unity
established between heaven and roof of Meru.[71] Similar
allusion is available in the texts of Matsya Purana
(11. 37-38) and Padma Purāṇa (pātālakhaṇḍa, 8.72-73).

It is noteworthy that, in the latter reference
Kumārila makes use of term Ucyate, which points to
the availability of the description in the extant
Purāṇas. Thus, Kumārila's references reveal two
distinct aspects of Purāṇa-tradition. In the first
aspect we find alteration or even modification of

passages which were inconsonant with the current practices. The second aspect is characterized by the incorporation of such passages, the appeal of which had been constantly maintained in the society.

Besides Kumārila, Śaṅkara also recognized the authoritative character of the Purāṇa-tradition. More than often he supports his commentaries on the Upanishads and the Brahmasūtra by the passages, the source of which are said to be the Smṛitis and the Purāṇas. This point had earlier attracted the attention of Winternitz.[72] Upadhyaya has brought to light a number of such passages, which need fresh analysis.[73] On such occasions as Hazra points out Śaṅkara makes generic reference to the Purāṇas without specifying the names of these texts.[74] Without disagreeing with the observation of Hazra, we may suggest that Purāṇic allusions of Śaṅkara's reference are available not only in early Purāṇa texts like Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa and Viṣṇu but also in Śiva Purāṇa which is a late Purāṇa-text. This analysis probably reveals that in the age of Śaṅkara the authenticity of a passage was considered not because of the earliness of the text but because of the earliness of the matter preserved in a particular Purāṇa.

The authenticity of Purāṇa-tradition can also
be visualized in the light of the Kathā-works. These
texts contain parallel types or sometimes even parent
types of ākhyānas which played an important role
in the development of Purāṇa-tradition right from
the very beginning. These ākhyānas' served the purpose
of Purāṇic technique of giving story-forms to such
accounts which were beyond the grasp of common mind
in their original abstract form. Although the Kathā-
account had assumed the form of a separate class
of literature, yet the fact can not be denied that
with a view to gaining the stamp of publicity it was
very often made part of Purāṇa-text. Sternbach observes
that proverbial, instructive and ethical verses which
are available in the relevant contexts of the Purāṇas
bestow striking similarity to those available in
the Kathā-works.[75] These verses are not only partially
identical, but are also indistinguishable in a number
of cases. Despite their dissimilar forms, they are
intended to convey similar meaning. More significant
are the verses of Kathā-works, which refer to the
authority of the Purāṇas in a number of cases. It
may be noted that the quoted verses are missing from
the relevant contexts of the Purāṇas. However, the
proverbial verses are preserved in them. IN view
of the proverbial verses, the Purāṇa texts are

presentable in the following order : Bhavishya, Agni,
Garuḍa, Brahmavaivartta, Bhāgavata, Vāmana, Matsya,
Vishnu, Śiva and Skanda. It would be significant
to find out as to whether Kathā-text or the Purāṇa-
text was considered to be the better authority in
respect of proverbial verses. In this context Sternbach
draws our attention to Śukasaptati, which recognizes
the authority of Bhavishya Purāṇa for its proverbial
verses. Besides, Śukasaptati, Vetālapañcaviṁśatikā
is another important Kathā-work. Bhavishya Purāṇa
allude to the entire story of Vetālapañcaviṁśatikā.
But, the authentic character of the extant Bhavishya
Purāṇa is extremely doubtful. Original matter is
hardly traceable in the text. Fresh matters of quite
late periods are incorporated in the text. The section
of the text which alludes to Vetālapañcaviṁśatikā
also refers to British rule in India. It is possible
that the portion on Vetālapañcaviṁśatikā was already
present in the text at the stage of incorporating
the passages which smack of modernity. There is also
another possibility. The said kathā-work was incorporated
in the Bhavishya Purāṇa at two stages. Originally
when it was added in the Bhavishya, it had no fixed
form. At the subsequent stage it assumed the form
of a separate text. For its addition the Bhavishya
was retouched. Similar trend seems to have operated

in respect of other Purāṇa texts. But it is not
detectable as clearly as in case of the Bhavishya
Purāṇa. This may be cited as an evidence of mutual
indebtedness of the Purāṇa-texts and the Kathā-texts.

The foregoing details tend to show that the
Purāṇa-tradition is of multiplex character; its utility
can hardly be denied for the reconstruction of various
shades of history of ancient, early medieval and
medieval history of India. As we have noted above
the expansile format of the Purāṇa-texts was to a
large extent due to the application of the archaistic
style called "Purāṇa-samupaḅṛmhaṇa," i.e. process
of augmentation. We can hardly disagree with the
view that the problem of Purāṇa-literature is not
in the hands of chronology, for it should be clearly
understood that in almost all the Purāṇas the process
of Upavṛmhaṇa was operative from the very beginning
and uptoɸ later times. Explaining the objective of
upavṛmhaṇa it has been observed that it is pejorative
to speak of it as interpolation. It was a sacred
obligation of authorship to keep the text up to date
by revising its contents as often as necessary. The
expression 'upavṛmhaṇa' has also been defined as
the act of editing or redacting which is visible
in all the Purāṇas. It has been emphasised that the

upavrimhana was a deliberate technique, consequent
upon which the existing Purāṇas have gained in size
and scope.[76] Throwing light on the process of
upavrimhana though not explicitly Kane observes that
after the 9th century A.D. additional matter seems
to have been unscrupulously inserted in several Purāṇas
the worst sufferer of the kind being the third part
of Bhavishya Purāṇa, which contains stories of Adam
and Eve, Prithviraja and Jayachandra, Taimur, Akbar,
Caitanya, Bhaṭṭoji, Nādirshaha and so on.[77] In fact,
it is largely due to the impact of the process of
Upavrimhana that the Purāṇas have turned to be
encylopaedia of information, and as V.R.R. Dikshitar
holds, these texts are very useful in writing a history
of Indian Culture and Civilization.[78] Similar is
the observation of Hazra that the Purāṇas have not
come down to us with their early incorporations,
because tradition demanded that they should be
re-edited with the changes in society so that their
importance as works of authority might not decrease.
The work of re-editing could be done in three ways :
viz., (I) by adding fresh chapters to the already
existing ones, (II) by substituting the latter by
the former, (III) by writing new works bearing old
titles. All these processes being equally practised
with respect to the Purāṇas, some retained their

earlier materials, some lost many of the earlier chapters which were replaced by others of later dates, and some became totally new works.[79]

The unique character of the Purāṇa tradition is because of its comprehensive form. It has proved to be helpful in understanding and reconstructing the socio-cultural and plitical history of early and later periods. The utility of Purāṇa passages has been realized even for the projection of vedic history. There are cases of synchronisms in the Vedic and Purāṇa passages, the examples of which have been illustrated by the scholars most convincingly.[80] The set of traditions, which is propagated by the Purāṇas is basically founded on the Vedic heritage.[81] The kings of the traditional account of the Purāṇas not figuring in the Ṛigveda may be pre-Vedic.[82] There is nothing unscientific or unhistorical in utilizing the Purāṇic data on the pre-Pāṇḍava period for reconstructing contemporary history after taking all due precautions. Various pre-Bhārata dynasties mentioned in the Purāṇas are as real and historical as the Śisunāgas, or the Mauryas or the Andhras.[83] The Purāṇic evidence is more trustworthy than the philogical one and is corroborated by the Vedic tradition.[84] There is harmony in the midst of apparent

discrepancies in the various lists of names given in the Purāṇic records on pre—Mahābhārata solar dynasty.[85] Pre-Bhārata war history can be reconstructed on the basis of agreement between the Vedic and Purāṇic traditions.[86]

In addition to the above observations of the scholars, it would not be out of place to⌀ mention that the account in the Purāṇas was compiled at a very late stage. It was compiled out of the remnants of the Vedic lores during the times when memories of had become faint and far removed froom actual state of affairs. However, the fact can hardly be denied that oft-quoted discrepancies of the Purāṇa-account *are* more apparent than real. It should not be forgotten that the Vedic texts and Purāṇa texts were produced under different circumstances with different aims and *objectives*. Consequently some differences in their accounts are inevitable. This cnsideration, however, does not minimize the comparative value of the two traditions. The noted western Indologist Keith shows scepticism about the historical value of the Purāṇas and wonders at the "naïve credulity" of those, who believe in the historicity of any event not explicitly mentioned in the Vedas.[87] This is a meaningless observation.

It may be noted that the Purāṇic ɑ̄rpus contains in
it not only Vedic trends but even ante-Vedic, non-Vedic
and also pre-Vedic trends. It was aimed at expanding
the Vedic tradition without ignoring the latter
traditions. Though apparently the Purāṇas in their
present shape contain a good deal of what is untrust-
worthy, yet it would be "absurd to suppose that fiction
completely ousted the truth." In this context P.V.
Kane rightly illustrates the view that; though the
rites, ceremonies, usages and religious views on
which most of the Purāṇas lay emphasis are different
from the Vedic tradition, they do not ignore the
Vedic tradition but try hard to build on the
foundations of the Vedic tradition.[88]

$$\frac{3774\text{-}10}{5302}$$

We have already noted that the traditional
number of (Mahā) Purāṇas is eighteen. However, the
point needs elaboration in view of the importance
of the totality of the Purāṇa tradition. We are
proceeding to do this in the light of the observations
of the early scholars. In addition, we are also giving
our own hypothetical suggestions, as and when
necessary. Ealry scholars in the present context
include P.V. Kane (History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol.
V, Part II, 829-834): R.C. Hazra (Purānic Records
on Hindu Rites and Customs, pp. 174-189), Baladeva

Upadhyaya (Purāṇa-Vimarśa, pp. 75-80); A.D. Pusalker (Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas, pp. 31-41) etc. The traditional number of Purāṇas as eighteen has been enumerated in a number of Purāṇa-texts (Vide, Viṣṇu III. 6.21-23; Varāha 112.69-72, Verses 74-77; Liṅga 1.39.61-63; Padma IV. 100. 51-54; Bhaviṣya 1.1.61-64; Mārkaṇḍeya 134.7-11; Agni 272; Bhāgavata XII. 13.4-8; Vāyu 104. 2-10; Skanda, Prabhāsakhaṇḍa 2. 5-7). About the eighteen names there is no unanimity. The texts of Matsya (53. 18-19), Agni (272.5-6), Nāradīya (1.92.16-28) enumerate the Vāyu as the 4th among the eighteen Purāṇas, while most of the others substitute Śiva Purāṇa as the 4th in place of the Vāyu. The text of Skanda (Prabhāsakhaṇḍa, 2.5,7) puts Śiva as the 4th in place of Vāyu and Vāyavīya as the last. Kane feels that by Vāyavīya, probably Brahmāṇḍa is meant. Both Upadhyaya and Kane draw our attention to a verse of Devībhāgavata, which gives the names of the eighteen Purāṇas by their first letters. The verse omits the name of Śiva Purāṇa. (madvayam bhadvayam caiva batrayam vacatushṭayam/ anapaliṅgakūskāni purāṇāni pṛithak pṛithak// Devībhagavata 1, 3.2; madvayam - Matsya, Mārkaṇḍeya; bhadvayam - Bhaviṣya, Bhāvagata; batrayam - Brahma, Brahmavaivarta, Brahmāṇḍa; Vacatushṭayam - Varāha, Viṣṇu, Vāmana, Vāyu; a, na, pa, liṅa, ga respectively

stand for Agni, Nāradīya, Padma, Liṅga and Garuḍa. The name of Śiva Purāṇa is omitted in the verse. The Sutasaṁhitā (1.1.7-11) names eighteen Purāṇas omitting Vāyu and putting Śiva Purāṇa in its place. The Saura Purāṇa (9.5-12) enumerates eighteen Purāṇas, placing Vāyu as the 4th and Brahmāṇḍa as the last. It omits Śiva Purāṇa. The Dānasāgara in its introductory verses (11-12) mentions both Vāyavīya and Śaiva separately. The present problem has been intensively analysed by Hazra (ibid, pp. 13-14), Kane (ibid, p. 830-31), and Pusalker (ibid, pp. 31-40). These scholars unanimously contend that, it is the Vāyu that is entitled to be regarded as one of the principal Purāṇas and not the Śiva Purāṇa. We have already noted Alberuni's evidence in this regard. We may reiterate that Alberuni's work on India is known to have been composed around 1038 A.D. It sets out one list of Purāṇas as read out to him from Vishṇu Purāṇa. The list refers to Śiva Purāṇa instead of Vāyu. Kane observes, in view of the above, that the list of eighteen principal Purāṇas had been completed long before 1000 A.D. and was introduced in the Vishṇu Purāṇa many years before that date. Alberuni furnishes another list of the names of eighteen Purāṇas, which was communicated to him. The list enumerates Ādi, Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasimha, Vāmana, Vāyu, Nanda, Skanda, Āditya, Soma, Sāmba, Brahmāṇḍa, Mārkaṇḍeya,

Tārkshya (i.e. Garuḍa), Vishṇu, Brahma, Bhavishya. Thus, in the present list Vāyu and not Śiva is included On the whole, however, the list is not dependable. For, some Purāṇas like Adi, Narasimha, Nanda, Āditya, Soma and Sāmba described as Upapurāṇas in other works are included and some works like Padma, Bhāgavata, Nāradīya, Agni, Liṅga and Brahmavaivarta unanimously declared to be Mahāpurāṇas are omitted.

It has been noticed that the total number of verses in the Purāṇas according to the figures furnished by most Purāṇas comes to 400600 slokas. This closely agrees with the total of four lakhs assigned to the Purāṇas in the texts of Matsya (53.3-11) and Padma (V.1.45-52) (tadartho'tra caturlaksham samkshepeṇa niveśitam, Purāṇāni daśashṭau ca sāmpratam tadihocyate). But the position is quite different so far as the extant texts of the Purāṇas are concerned. Thus, Vishṇu Purāṇa is said to have contained 23.000 slokas, while the extant text has hardly 6000 slokes. IN the same way the extent of the Kūrma is said to be 17000 or 18000 ślokas, but the extant Kūrma has hardly 6000 slokas. The number of ślokas of the Brahma is said to be 25000, but the extant printed text of Brahma contains about 14000 verses. The text of Skanda is said to contain

81000 ślokas, but the extant printed text of Skanda contains several thousand more. The Bhavishya Purāṇa (Brahmaparva, 1.104-105) states that all Purāṇas had originally 12000 verses each but their extent increased by addition of tales, so that Skanda was inflated of one lakh of ślokas and the Bhavishya to 50000 ślokas.

It has been further noticed that the order in which the Purāṇas are enumerated is not quite uniform. Most of the Purāṇas put the Brahma[89] in the first place and set out the order as under : (1) Brahma, (2) Padma, (3) Vishṇu, (4) Vāyu, (5) Bhāgavata, (6) Nāradīya, (7) Mārkaṇḍeya, (8) Agni, (9) Bhavishya, (10) Brahmavaivarta, (11) Liṅga, (12) Varāha, (13) Skanda, (14) Vāmana, (15) Kūrma, (16) Matsya, (17) Garuḍa, (18) Brahmāṇḍa. The Skanda (Prabhāsakhaṇḍa 2.8-9) puts the Brahmāṇḍa in the first place. The Vāmana[90] regards Matsya as the foremost among the Purāṇas. Contents of all the eighteen Purāṇas are mentioned in Matsya (Chapter 53), Agni (Chapter 272), Nāradīya (Chapters from 1.92.30-43 to 1.109). There is unanimity among the Purāṇas in respect of the names of the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas. However, in some of them Vāyu Purāṇa is substituted by Śiva Purāṇa. The substitution is a later

interpolation. It is noteworthy that Bālamabhaṭṭa, who flourished in the later half of 18th century states in his commentary on the Mitāksharā (on yajñavalkyasaṁhitā, 1.3) that the Vāyavīya Purāṇa is also called Śaiva.

There is no doubt about the fact that for the study of socio-religious trends and traditions at the various stages of Indian history, the Upapurāṇas are as important as the Mahāpurāṇas. In this connection attention has been drawn to the evidence to Matsya Purāṇa,[91] which relates that the upapurāṇas are mere subsections (upabheda) of the Furāṇas and propounds the theory that any Purāṇic work which will be found to be 'different' (pṛithak) from the eighteen Purāṇasx must be known to have originated from one or other of these Purāṇas.[92] This theory had gained much publicity. Thus, the Skanda Purāṇa verbably reproduces it.[93] The Nibandhakāras refer to or reproduce the lines of the Matsya Purāṇa in explaining the origin and nature of the different Upapurāṇas.[94] Hazra has traced out two verses in the extant Saura Purāṇa, which lend strong support to the above theory and calls the Upapurāṇas mpre suppleṁt (khila) to the principal Purāṇas and attaches itself in that capacity to the Brahma Purāṇa.[95] Despite the wide acceptance

of this theory, an examination of the Upapurāṇas themselves shows that these works do not often look upon this theory with the same respect as the principal Purāṇas or other works do. In most cases the upapurāṇas style themselves simply 'Purāṇa' and not 'Upapurāṇa.' They proceed to pass on their own merit and do not care to attach themselves for the sake of authority to any of the principal Purāṇas. This is the case with the Narasiṁha Purāṇa, Devī Purāṇa, Kālikā Purāṇa and many others. Sometimes, they declare their claim of being principal Purāṇa. Thus, in its Vāyavīya-saṁhitā (1.1.41) the Śiva Purāṇa lays claim to the position of principal · Purāṇa. It also states that the Devībhāgavata (1.3.16) includes the Bhāgavata Purāṇa among the upapurāṇas, obviously in order to establish its own claim to the status of a Purāṇa. The Kālikā Purāṇa claims to be the real Bhāgavata Purāṇa. This, according to Hazra, is probably because of its dealing with the exploits of Bhagavatī.[96] The older of the extant Upapurāṇas like Devīpurāṇa, Narasiṁhapurāṇa and Sāmbapurāṇa do not give any list of Upapurāṇas. Also, they do not seem to be familiar with their common title 'Upapurāṇa.' Likewise they do not refer to the theory of their origin making them mere supplements to the principal Purāṇas. As Hazra, has noticed there is disagreement between the time-honoured theory and the actual practice of the Upapurāṇas, especially of the older ones."

Attention has been drawn to the non-inclusion of the word 'Upapurāṇa' in the Amarakośa which defines 'Purāṇa' as 'pañcalakshaṇa' and the mention of the titles of the 'eighteen' Purāṇas in the Vishṇu Purāṇa, Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna etc. without any reference, direct or indirect, to any Upapurāṇa, tend to show that the group of the 'eighteen' Purāṇas had been formed before the Upapurāṇas came into existence.[97] The above observation is supported by the tradition recorded in the Kūrma Purāṇa (1.1.16), Śiva māhatmya-khaṇḍa of the Sūta saṁhitā of the Skanda Purāṇa (1.12, 13) and Parāśara-upapurāṇa (1.27-28). The said tradition alludes to the composition of the Upapurāṇas by different sages after the eighteen Purāṇas had been completed by Satyavatī-suta, Vyāsa. The tradition thus demanded that the original position of the 'eighteen' Purāṇas and the rigidity of their number should be maintained. Side by side it also needed that the Upapurāṇas should also be given a position. In some extant Purāṇas, these are grouped under the common title 'Upapurāṇas.' In a few cases, they are found to attach themselves as supplements to one or other of the eighteen Purāṇas. As we have noted earlier the Saura Purāṇa calls itself a supplement to the Brahma Purāṇa in the body of the work as well as in the chapter-colophon.[98] The tendency was also

to call themselves 'Upapurāṇas', despite their
independent character. The The most pertinent instance
of it is Parāśara-Upapurāṇa, a manuscript of which
has been described by Eggeling in his India Office
Library Caalogue, VI, pp 1229-30 and has also been
noticed by Hazra.[99]

We can hardly disagree with the view that
from several considerations the Upapurāṇas are more
important than the Mahāpurāṇas. The text of the extant
Mahāpurāṇas are the results of innumerable changes,
modifications and interpolations made in different
times under varied types of sectarian pressures.
For the reconstruction of history they can be used
only after taking adequate precaution. In all
probability owing to their secondary position, the
Upapurāṇas have been worked upon much less freely
by the latter redactors. Thus, despite their
distinctive sectarian character the Upapurāṇas have;
at least in some cases, preserved their older
materials. It has to be accepted that among the extant
Upapurāṇas there are some which are much older than
many of the extant Mahāpurāṇas. They are to be valued
as the records of changes undergone in different
ages by the respective sects to which these works
originally belonged. It has been rightly observed
that the Upapurāṇa works consists of a large number

of works of which some are available in printed forms, some exist in manuscripts, some are known only from references and quotations, and some have perished altogether without leaving any trace of their existence.[100]

In addition to what has been said above, highlighting the notes and observations of the early scholars, it may be emphasized that :

(a)   the Purāṇa tradition has to be valued for the reconstruction of various aspects of socio-cultural and political history of India,

(b)   despite their independent character in many cases and at several issues, the Upapurāṇas should be treated as part of Purāṇa tradition,

(c)   the evidence of this tradition has its worth in the totality of its account; one single text of the Mahāpurāṇa group or of the Upapurāṇa group may not be of much use for protraying an overall picture of the past,

(d)   the historical elements accumulated in this tradition is of the nature of omnium-gatherum; the trustworthiness of which can scarcely be held in doubt, though sometimes and in a few cases it has to be checked and balanced by the external evidences.

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9.   Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, XIII, 4, 3.12-13; IX, 5.6.7.9; XIV. 6.106.

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42.   For example see Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, VIII,.
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POSITION OF GIRLS

There is considerable substance in the observation of the sociologists that in ancient times in all patriarchical societies birth of a girl was generally considered as an unwelcome and unpleasant event. Since the son was a permanent asset to the family, he was valued more than the daughter. He was a caretaker of the parents in their old age. The daughter migrated to another family after her marraige. This was not the case with the son. He was bearer of the name and tradition of family to the future generations. The son was considered to be capable of protecting the family or attacking an enemy. It was felt that the daughter has no fighting value whatever. Following Westermarch, the sociologist, Altekar observes that the primitive man could not take a long view of the situation that women have potential military value in the sense that by giving birth to sons they contribute indirectly to the fighting strength and efficiency of their community. He found the woman a handicap rather than a help. Altekar further observes that in India too in the early times the daughter was not as welcome as the son. Quoting Geieger on the present point, the noted scholar shows that this tendency prevailed even in the Indo-Iranian age[1], and the same was the case in the Vedic period. In this connection reference has been made to the passages of Atharvaveda, which

contain charms and rituals to ensure the birth of a son in preference to that of a daughter.[2] Kane notices that this rite was called caturthīkarma, and while performing this rite the husband had to murmur several other verses in this strain 'may a male embryo enter thy womb as an arrow into the quiver; may a man be born here, a son, after ten months.'[3]

Coming to the Purāṇic evidence on the above issue; the details may be gathered in the saṁskāra called Puṁsavana which was performed with the purpose of getting male issue. The Vishṇu Purāṇa[3A] and Matsya Purāṇa[4] relate that Kaśyapa had sexual intercourse with Diti for procuring a Valiant son. According to the texts of Vāyu Purāṇa[5] and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa,[6] the Yādava king Devavṛidha had performed the rite with a view to getting a talented son. A number of vows and regular practices are mentioned in the Purāṇas for procuring a male issue. According to Garuḍa Purāṇa, a son has to be got by some means or other. There is no final peaceful way for a person who has no sons, and never heaven.[6A] The text of Skanda Purāṇa states that a person, who has no son, is not fit to be invited on auspicious occasions

or in the rite of the manes.[7] The same Purāṇa further ordains that the houses of those who have no sons resemble funeral grounds, the manes, deities along with sages do not partake of meals at such places.[8] The text also refers to Bhīshmapañcakavrata. A sonless person is advised to perform this vow along with his wife, if he desires to get a son within a year. As a part of this vow, a pāpapurusha (an effigy of "sin") is to be given away. Obviously, the pāpa indicates the hindrance to get issues.[9] The texts of classical Sanskrit literature reveal similar state of affairs. We may illustrate here some passages of the works of Kālidāsa. As noted by B.S. Upadhyaya, Kālidāsa has dwelt long on the importance of a son.[10] In course of eight verses in the first canto of Raghuvaṁśa, the poet has shown the emptinese of the life of a son-less person. It relates that the forefathers do not accept with delight their shares in the obsequies performed by a son-less descendant due to the anxiety of their losing them in the next generation.[11] Their sighs of grief render hot the libation of water offered to them by their descendants.[12] The extinction of the male line is a great misfortune, for the merits resulting from the austerities and alms are for the happiness in the next world, but the son begotten on the wife of pure blood is indeed the cause of happiness both here and hereafter.13

A graphic description of the situation can be gleaned from Abhijñanśakuntalam, where Dushyanta expresses lamentable words about his being a sone-less father; "Alas ! The participators of the rice-cakes offered by Dushyanta have reached a dubious situation. For, surely of the water offered by me, destitute of progeny the forefathers drink what is left after washing their tears brought forth by the thought - "Alas, who after in our race, this person will do the libations, prepared according to the Śrutis."[14]

There are, however, evidences to show that the birth of daughter was not as unwelcome as is commonly supposed. In this connection, Altekar draws our attention to a ritual mentioned in the Brihadārnyaka Upanishad recommending to a house-holder for ensuring the birth of a scholarly daughter.[14A] It has been rightly observed that this ritual did not become as popular as the Puṁsavana one, prescribed for procuring the birth of a suṇ; but it clearly shows that cultured parents were often as anxious for daughters as they were for sons.[15] On the basis of Samyutta Nikāya (III. 2, 6), it is contended that some thinkers have pointed out that a talented and well behaved daughter may be better than a son.[16] As regards the Purāṇas, following illustrations

are of special note. The text of Matsya Purāṇa makes reference to Aśvapati, the Madra king. It is stated that he procured his daughter Sāvitrī, consequent upon his constant devotion to the goddess.[17]

The said Purāṇa relates the story of Devayānī. She was the beloved daughter of Śukra. Once she was insulted by the daughter of Vrishaparvā. This raised the anger of Śukra who compelled Vrishaparvā to send his daughter in the service of Devayānī to perform the work of a slave.[18] In the Vishṇu Purāṇa, there is an interesting legend revealing the affection of the father to his daughters. It is related that the devout sage Saubhari, who was well versed in the Vedas had spent twelve years immersed in a piece of water. The spot was abode of Sammada, the sovereign of the fish. He had a very numerous progeny. His children and grandchildren were wont to frolic around him in all directions. He lived amongst them happily, playing with them night and day. The sage Saubhari was inspired by this scene. He wished to taste such pleasure. Having thus resolved, the sage came hastily from the water. Desirous of entering upon the condition of a householder, he went to Māndhātri to demand one of his daughters as his wife. He put his proposal before the king, who felt disposed to refuse his consent.

But dreading to incur the anger and imprecation of the sage, he was much perplexed. Ultimately the king came to learn that, all his daughters were willing to choose the sage for their husband. Although with extreme reluctance, he was obliged to agree that the sage should marry all his daughters. After wedding them agreeably to law, the sage took them to his habitation. It is narrated that the sage employed the chief architect Viśvakarman to construct separate palaces for each of his wives. The divine architect constructed splendid apartments for them. The text alludes that affection of the king to his daughters did not wane. His heart yearned for his daughters, and he left solicitous to know whether they were happily circumstanced.[19] In connection with the sadācāras or perpetual obligation of a householder, the Vishnu Purāṇa relates that he must provide food for his married daughter remaining at her father's dwelling, and then he may eat himself. He who eats first without feeding her is guilty of sin.[20] Reference is made in the text of Vishnu Purāṇa to the maiden called Mārishā. It is narrated that the sovereign Soma himself had nourished her with his rays. She has been put in the category of gem.[21] Similarly Revatī, who was later on wedded to Balarāma, the wielder of ploughshare, is called 'virgin gem' in the same text.[22] The daughter who is

endowed with śīla or virtue is considered to be better than a son. Thus, Matsya Purāṇa relates that a daughter who is not destitute of śīla is equal to ten sons.[23] Similar observation is made in Padma Purāṇa, which enjoins that a daughter who is possessed of śīla is auspicious and equal to ten sons.[24] The Vishṇudharma (upa) purāṇa refers to a girl named Śīladhanā. She was married to the Haihaya king Kṛitavīrya. She was considered to be fit for observing ananta-vrata.[25] In the Devībhāgavata Purāṇa, seller of daughter has been condemned. The text reveals that, such action was considered to be a social crime.[26] On the basis of the references of Rāmāyaṇa, Altekar points out that goddess of Fortune was regarded as residing in the person of the unmarried daughter; so she and not the unmarried boy, was regarded as an object of good men. Unmarried girls were, therefore, among the persons selected to receive Rāma on his return to Ayodhyā from his long exile and to offer him the coronation ablution. Rāma is stated to have received this religious bath first at the hands of unmarried girls and then of his trusted generals and ministers.[26A] Attention may here be drawn to some passages of the Devībhagāvata for almost a similar information. The text refers to king Kuśadhvaja. He had a daughter named Vedavatī. She was considered as a part of Lakshmī reborn. She

was versed in the ~~bore~~ Vedic lore from her very birth. With a view to pleasing Nārāyaṇa, she is stated to have practised austerities first at Pushkara and then on the Gandhamādana mountain.[27] There is also reference to king Dharmadhvaja. His daughter is named as Tulsī. She is said to have been born as part of Lakshmi. She practised austerities at Pushkara.[28]

The text of Vishṇu Purāṇa depicts an interesting story with regard to the desire of a father to see the face of his daughter who did not come out of the womb of her mother for a pretty long time. It so happened that the queen of Kāśirāja conceived. She was quick with a daughter. But, when the time of delivery arrived she did not come out of the womb. Twelve uears passed away, and still the girl was unborn. Then Kāśirāja spoke to the child and said, 'Daughter, why is your birth thus delayed? Come forth; I desire to behold you, why do you inflict this protracted suffering upon your mother? Thus addressed, the infant answered, 'If father, you will present a cow every day to the Brāhmaṇas, I shall at the end of three years more be born". The king accordingly presented a cow daily to the Brahmaṇas and at the end of three years the damsel came into the world. Her father called her "Gāndinī", as for her sake every day (dina) a cow was given (gam + dina = nāndkinī).29

It has been rightly observed that the passages
of early texts, showing that the birth of daughter
was an unwelcome event, were a natural result of
the greater anxiety which the parents felt for her
well-being and happiness. Once the temporary feeling
of disappointment was over, the family took as keen
an interest in the daughter as it did in the son.
On the basis of Āpastamba Gṛihya Sūtra (XVI. 12-13)
it is stated that on his return from a journey the
father used to recite a mantra for the welffare
of his daughter just with the same solicitude as
he did for the happiness of his son.[30] As regards
the Purāṇic evidence on the point we may illustrate
two references from the text of Liṅga Purāṇa. Thus,
in connection with Indradyumna, king of Avanti,
it is stated that he worshipped seven Brāhmaṇas
for the welfare of his daughter whose marriage was
due.[31] At another place the text explains the meaning
of the word putrī on the lines of definition of
the word putra. The word is explained as a girl
who saves her parents from the hell called "put".[32]

It has been observed that, although the feeling
of dejection and dissatisfaction at the birth of
a daughter was a fleeting one, it did not lead to
female infanticide in ancient India.[33] It has also
been shown that the most important passage on which

some European scholars like Zimmer and Delbruch rely upon for this proposition is a passage of Taittirīya Saṃhitā (V. 5. 10. 3), which has been translated as under, "they go to the avabhritha (the final sacrificial bath); they keep aside the sthālīs and take up the vessels for Vāyu; therefore they (the people) keep aside the girl when she is born and lift up (i.e. greet with pride and joy) the son."[34] It has been pointed out that the passage under reference has its indication to the traditional habit of Hindu midwives of keeping the child aside on the ground if it was a daughter and of lifting it up in joy if it was a son. The passage has no reference to the abandonment of unwanted daughters. It has been noted that, if female infanticide had at all been practised, it must have been confined to a very small section of society. If the evil had been fairly common, Smṛiti writers would certainly have denounced it very vehemently. When we note how eloquent they grew in condemning the conduct of a father who would accept bride-price for his daughter in marriage, we can not but conclude that they would have consigned to the most dreadful hell those parents who were guilty of exposing their daughters at birth because they were unwelcome. Smṛiti writers regard the destruction of an embryo as the most henious crime; the murder of a child

born alive could not have escaped their thundering denounciation.[35]

Now, we proceed to evaluate Purāṇic evidence on the present problem. The Purāṇa tradition reveals a similar state of affairs. Thus, the text of Matsya Purāṇa categorically denounces a person who destroys an embryo and equates this act with the killing of a Brāhmaṇa.[36] The text of Vishṇu Purāṇa enjoins that such persons or even those who are in contact with them go to hell.[37] According to Brahmāṇḍa Purana, the removal of this sin is not possible even by austerity.[38] In this context Liṅga Purāṇa refers to an ātreyī, i.e., a woman in menstruation. The text relates that, to kill her is to incur the sin of Brāhmaṇa killing.[39]

The passages of Purāṇas reveal that care was taken even of those girls who were of unusual births. They were popularly known as ayonijā. Some illustrations may be given here. Thus, the Brahmvaivarta Purāṇa alludes to the story of a girl called Vṛindā. She was born from fire-altar. She became daughter of king Kedāra. She was considered to be a digit of Lakshmī, the lotus-born.[40] The same text relates the story of Kalāvatī, who is said to have been born from the fire-altar at

Kānyakubja. King Bhanandana got her at the end of the sacrifice as she came out of the altar, naked and smiling, in the form of a child yet in the milk-sucking stage of life. His wife, Mālāvatī took the girl to her bosom.[41] The text of Skanda Purāṇa alludes to the account of king Ākāśa, the son of Mitravarman. It is said that, while ploughing he found a girl named Padminī. The girl was brought up by the said king. Later on she was married to ~~Srimvasa~~ Śrīṇivāsa.[42] These instances tend to suggest that infanticide or exposure of girls was never practised in ancient India.

The Purāṇa-texts also refer to the types and categories of girls in different contexts. They are named variously in accordance with the consideration of their age. Thus, the text of Skanda Purāṇa applies the epithet Gaurī to a girl of seven years.[43] Similar information is supplied by Saṃskāra Prakāśa.[44] In some texts the age is extended by one year and a damsel of eight years is called Gaurī.[45] The epithet nagnikā was applied to a girl of nine years.[46] The word nagnikā has been interpreted in different ways by the Dharmaśāstras and the commentaries written on them. Thus, Mātṛdatta on Hiraṇyā-keśi Grihyasūtra (1.19.2) explains that nagnikā means one whose menstrual period is near.' Ashtavakra, the commentator of Mānava Grihyasūtra

(1.7.8) explains nagnikā as one who has not yet experienced the impulses and emotions of youth' or 'one who looks pretty even without clothes.' Gṛihyasaṁgraha quoted in commentary on Gobhila Gṛihyasūtra (III, 46.) explains 'nagnikā' as one who has not yet reached puberty. Vasishṭha Dharmasūtra (17.70) says 'the father should give away his daughter while she is still nagnikā through fear of her attaining puberty (while unmarried).' It has been observed that, this shows that according to Vasishṭha nagnikā must have been a girl of tender years or one that had not attained puberty.[46A] It may be added that āṭikī of the Vedic account was the same as the nagnikā of the above description. Reference to āṭikī is available in the Chandogya-Upanishad. It is narrated that Uśatī Cākrāyaṇa was residing in the Kuru country with his wife. She is said to have been āṭitī. Commenting upon the concerned passage of the text Saṁkara explains āṭiti as 'a mere undeveloped girl."[47] Other categories of girls are mentioned as Rohiṇī, Kanyā and Vṛishali. A girl of nine years is called Rohiṇī, while one of ten years is called Kanya in Skanda Purana.[47A] A girl who reached the 'period' and actually witnessed menstruation was named Vṛishali. The person who married such a girl was termed Vrishali-pati. There are two such passages in Skanda Purāṇa, where father

of Vrishali girl has been condemned. In one passage he is branded as bhrūnahā, i.e. destroyer of embryo or killer of foetus.[48] In the other one under similar circumstances, the father is denounced as brahmahan, i.e. brāhmana-killer.[49] Similarly the text Vishnu Purāna prescribes that, a person protects the issue of a Vrishali or one who is husband of a Vrishali should not be invited on the occasion of the ceremony of the manes.[50]

There is also reference to the type of girls called Visha-kanyā or poison-girls. In this connection the text of Devī Purāna depicts an interesting story. It is stated that the demon Dundubhi who, for his lust for Siva's wife Uma, was burnt to ashes by Śiva. From these ashes was born the demon Ghora. He was to reign supreme in Kusa-dvīpa and was to be killed by Devī mounted on a lion when this Ghora would try to have her as his wife. In order to check the demon from this evil designs, Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva deputed Nārada to Kusa-dvīpa for turning Ghora and his wife and subjects from the path of dharma. Ghora forsook the path of dharma and turned a debauch. In order to bring Ghora to his senses, Ghora's wife Candramatī gave him good counsels by referring to the policies of statecraft and to the dangers from poison-girls (Visha-kanyā) and others

including washer women (rajakī) fisherwomen (kaivartī) etc.[51] The common belief was that, a girl who has been administered poison from childhood in regular quantity becomes a poison-girl. The text of Skanda Purāṇa relates that a girl who is born when the Sun is in the Citrā constellation, or when moon is seen on the 14th dark of a month is called "poison-girl." It is stated that a person who marries her is sure to die within sixth months, and the place wherein she is born gets ruined within six months.[52]

The Purāṇa-passages reveal the practice of gifts of girls to illustrious personages. In this connection, the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa relates how Jāmbavat prostrated before Kṛṣhṇa and presented to him his daughter Jāmbavatī, as an offering to a suitable guest.[53] In the same text, it is said of Swaphalka, the father of Akrūra, that whereever he dwelt, there famine, plague, death and other visitations were unknown. Once there was no rain in the kingdom of Kāsirāja. Swaphalka was brought there, and immediately there fell rain from the heavens. The text relates that Swaphalka was honoured by Kāsirāja who offered his daughter Gāndinī to him.[54] Gift of a girl is extolled in a number of other Purāṇas. Thus the text of Brahma Purāṇa enjoins that, those who make gift of their daughter to a

suitable bride-groom after decorating her with ornament attain heaven.[55] According to Śiva Purāṇa, the gift of a daughter bestows all pleasures to the given.[56] There are also references to the effect that, gift of the girls were made on special occasions. Thus in Brahma Purāṇa Avantirāja Indradyumna is said to have given one hundred and five maidens, well decorated, on the conclusion of horse-sacrifice.[57] The text of Brahmāṇda Purāṇa narrates that king Janaka had made gift of girls along with villages, gems and gold to the Brāhmaṇas on the occasion of horse-sacrifice.[57A] The text of Śiva Purāṇa enjoins that a person may employ his daughter in the worship of Śiva, and he should give her to a devotee of Śiva, not to any one else.[58]

The text of Skanda Purāṇa refers to the gifts of slave-girls.[59] In its Lalitopakhyāna section, Brahmāṇda Purāṇa refers to four types of slave-girls. These are as under; Devadāsī, i.e., temple-girl, Brahmadāsī, i.e., a girl with a Brāhmaṇa, Svatantrā, i.e., free-lancing and Śūdradāsī, i.e., a girl of the Śūdra varṇa or one with a Śūdra. It is stated that the first two have the status of a Kshatriya woman, the other two are said to be on par with prostitutes.[60] The text of Śiva Purāṇa states that

the temple girls are created by Visvakarmā. The
purpose of their creation is to render service to
Siva with songs and dances and various other arts.
They are said to be beautiful and endowed with
prosperity. On festival occasions Siva is said to
be surrounded by these girls.[61] It has been observed
that the Devadāsi institution was allied to that
of gaṇikā. These girls were maintained in the great
temples for the worship of the gods. Such girls
were kept at the great temple of Mahākāla at Ujjayini
in days of Kālidasa.[62] Hiuen Tsang reports the
maintenance of Devadāsis at a shrine of Sun-god
in a city east of Sindh.[63] As regards Brahmadāsi
of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa's description noted above, mention
may be made of an account available in kātyāyanasmriti-
sāroddhāra, which refers to the purchase or sell
of a Brāhmaṇa as a slave. The text enjoins that
the king should annual that transaction and all
persons (concerned in it) should be fined by him.[64]
The Brahmadāsi may be interpreted in the light of
the above account. So far as the slave girl of
Swatantrā category is concerned, the reference is
perhaps to the type of slave who sells herself
of one's own accord. Nārada-smṛiti declares that
this is the worst type.[65] With regard to Sūdradāsi,
a reference of Nārada-smṛiti may be quoted here.
The smṛitikāra accords permission to a Sūdra for

becoming slave of a Kshatriya, but forbids a kshatriya for becoming slave of Śūdra.[66]

Next, we proceed to take into account Purāṇic passages on Daughter's right to property. Before doing this, it would be proper to highlight Dharmaśāstric view on the point. It has been observed that, the Gautama Dharmasūtra, Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra and Vasishṭha Dharmasūtra omit the daughter as an heir.[67] Āpastamba Dharmasūtra recognizes the daughter as an optional heir.[68] Manu-smṛiti declares that "one's son is like oneself and one's daughter is equal to one's self and one's daughter is equal one's son; how can another person take the wealth (of the deceased) when she who is the very self (of the deceased) lives."[69] This practice may even be traced back to the Vedic period. Thus in the Ṛigveda Usha has been compared to a maiden who inherits the property of her father in the absence of brothers.[70]

As far the Purāṇas, a reference may be made here to the Purāṇic legend relating to the syamantaka gem. Thus, the Vishṇu Purāṇa narrates that the divine Āditya, the sun was a friend of king Satrājit of the Yādava lineage. Satrājit received the syamantaka gem from the divinity. Having gone to his house, there

deposited the jewel, which daily yielded eight loads of gold, and through its marvellous virtue dispelled all fear of potzents, wild beasts, fire, robbers and famine. The precious gem in due course turned to be a bone of contention amongst the Yādavas. The Purāṇa narrative refers to the right of Ṣatyabhāmā, the daughter of Satrājit. In the assembly of the Yādavas, Krishṇa announced that the syamantaka-gem was the patrimonial inheritance of Satyabhāmā. It is noteworthy that in the entire legend there is no reference to any brother of Satyabhāmā.[71] This situation accords well with the Dharmaśāstric injunction, which permits daughter's right to father's estate in the absence of sons. There is yet another Purāṇa legend, which reveals that paternal property could be claimed only by a brotherless girl. On the other hand a girl having brothers could not claim such property. In this context, the texts of Vishṇu Purāṇa, Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa and Vāyu Purāṇa narrate that Manu desirous of sons, offered a sacrifice for that purpose to Mitra and Varuna. But the rite being deranged, through an irregularity of the ministering priest, a daughter named Ilā was produced. Through the favour of the two divinities, however, her sex was changed, and she became a man, named Sudyumna. At a subsequent period, in consequence of becoming subject to the effects of a malediction

once pronounced by Śiva, Sudyumna was again transformed
to a woman in the vicinity of the hermitage of Budha,
the son of the deity of the Moon. Budha saw and
espoused her. He had a son named Purūravas by her.
After his birth the sages, desirous of restoring
Sudyumna to his sex prayed to Vishṇu. Through his
favour Ilā once more became Sudyumna. It is narrated
that in consequence of his having been $_\wedge$ a *originally* female,
Sudyumna was excluded from any share in his paternal
dominions.[72]

Above, we have noted the observtion of Altekar
that goddess of Fortune was regarded as residing
in the person of the unmarried daughter. We have
also illustrated Purāṇic evidences in support. There
are yet a number of references in the Purāṇas to
the effect that virgin girls were honoured on festival
occasions. Thus, in connection with dhvaja-dāna
in Devī-temples the text of Devī Purāṇa relates
that on this occasion virgin girls along with Brāhmaṇas
should be fed.[73] The text gives an account of
Sarvamaṅgalā aspect of Devī. It states that the
Devī should be worshipped in a maṇḍala from
Krishṇāshṭamī to Śukla-navamī in the month of Āśvina
with different names like Maṅgalā, Bhairavī, Durgā,
Kanyā, kapālī, Kaiṭabheśvarī, Kālī, Carcā etc. It
ordains that, on this occasion Virgin girls should

be fed.[74] Nandā Vrata, Vijayā Vrata and Nakshatra Vrata were observed in the twelve months with effect from Śāvaṇa. It is mentioned that in these vratas Brāhmaṇas, women and virgin girls should be fed.[75] A passage of Devī Purāṇa quoted in Durgā-bhakti Tarangiṇī (pp. 100-10) and Varāha kaumudī (pp. 376, 447) mentions that on Śuklā-saptamī, Navamī and Caturdaśī Tithis worship of virgin girls (kumārī-pūjā) should be performed. Feasts should be given to them. These virgin girls should place akshata on the head of the giver of the feast. In its chapters 60-63, written on devī-tantra, the text of Kalikā Purāṇa lays down the methods of autumnal worship of Devī. Among various operations on this occasion it also includes feeding of virgin girls. The text of Devī bhāgavata mentions a number of qualifications of virgin girls eligible for worship, and restrictions as regards their castes in case of Brāhmaṇa, kshatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra worshippers. Birth in a high family is one of the disqualifications for the girls to be worshipped.[75A]

Purāṇic passages also reveal the extent of education of girls in various contexts. In this connection, Altekar observes that, down to about the 3rd century B.C. girls could remain unmarried till the age of 16; and this period was utilised

for imparting education to them. Attention has also
been drawn to the fact that, till about the beginning
of the Christian era Upanayana or the ceremonial
initiating into Vedic studies was as common in the
case of girls as it was in the case of boys. The
initiation ceremony was followed by a period of
discipline and education, which was regarded as
very essential to secure a suitable match. The
tradition required that a maiden can succeed in
her marriage only if she has properly been trained
during the period of studenthood (brahmacarya,
brahmacaryeṇa kanyāṁ yuvāṁ vindate patim. Atharvaveda,
X 1.5, 18). That women are ineligible for Vedic
studies is the view of later timese. In early periods
lady poets themselves were composing hymns. The
tradition recorded in Sarvānu-kramaṇikā, relates
that there are as many as twenty women among the
'seers' or authors of Ṛigveda. Internal evidence
shows that Lopāmudrā, Viśvavārā, Sikatā Nivāvarī
and Ghoshā were authors of the Ṛigveda, 1.179; V.
28; VIII. 91; IX. 81, 11-20; and X. 39 and 40
respectively. Among the authors and scholars to
whose memory a daily tribute of respect is enjoined
to be paid at the time of brahmayajña, a few ladies
also are seen to figure. In the Āśvalāyana Gṛihya
Sūtra (III. 4, 4) they are recorded as Sulabhā
Maitreyī, Vaḍavā, Pratitheyī and Gārgī Vāchaknavī.

It is quite natural to believe that these ladies must have made real contributions to the advancement of knowledge and scholarship, otherwise their names would not have been recommended by posterity for all time to come. Their works are, however, not available.[76]

In the light of the above observation we may illustrate here some Purāṇa passages alluding to the names of girls, reputed for their being scholars. Some of them were also known for their Yogic practices, and severe penances. Such names are as under :

Menā and **Dhāriṇī** : Their account is available in the texts of Vishṇu Purāṇa,[77] Vāyu Purāṇa[78] and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.[79] Reference is made in this account to the progeny of the daughters of Daksha. It is mentioned that Swaahā had two daughters, namely, Menā and Dhāriṇī. It is narrated that both these maidens were acquainted with theological truth, both were addicted to religious meditation, and both were accomplished in perfect wisdom. For 'theological truth' and original expression used in the text is 'brahmavādinī'. It has been observed that women students were divided into two classes, brahmavādinīs and Sadyodvāhās. The former were life-

long students of theology and philosophy. The latter used to prosecute their studies till their marriage at the age of 15 or 16. During the eight or nine years that were thus available to them for study, they used to learn by heart the Vedic hymns prescribed for the daily and periodical prayers and for those rituals and sacraments in which they had to take an active part after their marriage. In this connection a passage of Rāmāyaṇa has been quoted, which describes that Sītā offered her daily Vedic prayers (V. 15. 48). Brahmavādinīs used to aim at a very high excellence in scholarship. Besides studying the Vedas, many of them used to specialise in Pūrvamimānsā, which discussed the diverse problems connected with Vedic sacrifices.[80]

Bhuvanā : The narrative of Bhuvanā is available in the texts of Vāyu Purāṇa[81] and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.[82] She is stated to have been a sister of Bṛhaspati. She is styled as "brahmavādinī", who had accomplished yogic practices. It is also narrated that, she had travelled throughout the world. In another context, the text of Vāyu Purāṇa relates that a student, after taking permission of his teacher should make a tour of the entire world, which helps in acquiring the essence of knowledge.[83]

Aparṇā, Ekaparṇā and Ekapāṭalā : Reference to these maidens is made in the texts Vāyu Purāṇa[84] and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa.[85] They are styled as 'brahmavādinī' and 'brahmacāriṇī'.

Sannati : Her reference is available in the text of Matsya Purāṇa.[86] It is related that she turned to be a 'brahmavādinī', because of her being occupied with her father's works. Probably the Purāṇa-author intends here to convey the idea that Sannati acquired the knowledge of theology from her father. There was no doubt practice of the children being taught in their own house by their father. In this connection we may quote a passage of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, which relates the story of a Brāhmaṇa named Śivadatta, who trained his sons in all the branches of Vedas.[87] This tradition may be traced back to the Vedic period. Thus, the Chāndogya-Upanishad relates that Āruṇi imparted to his son the subtle elements of philosophy.[88]

Śatarūpā : She is a well-known maiden of Purāṇa tradition. An additional information is supplied by the text of Matsya Purāṇa, where in she is described as 'brahmavādinī'.[89]

Vedavatī : Above we have made reference to Vedavatī, daughter of king Kuśadhvaja. In the present

context it may be mentioned that the text of
Devibhāgavata describes that she was considered
to be versed in the Vedic lore from her very birth.
With a view to pleasing Nārāyaṇa she practised
austerities first at Pushkara and then on the
Gandhamādana mountain, where she was touched perforce
by Rāvaṇa. Vedavatī cursed Rāvaṇa to be destroyed
for her sake, and left her body by means of Yogic
power.[90]

Maitreyī, Sulabhā, Gārgī and Śāṇḍilī : According
to the text of Vishṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa these maidens
attained success in Yoga. The text also asserts
that the proper practice of Yoga is sure to lead
one of any caste or sex to final release.[91]

Pīvarī : The story of Pīvarī is available
in the text of Matsya Purāṇa. The text relates that
she was mind-born daughter of the manes. She is
said to have been well versed in the knowledge of
Yoga. She practised severe ~~penancis~~ penances.[92]

Next, we are proceeding to evaluate Purāṇa-
passages with regard to the proficiency of the girls
in music, dancing and painting. Altekar observes
that cultivation of these fine arts in case of girls

was encouraged since very early times. Musical recitation of the Sāma hymns was originally the special function of the ladies. It is clear that they must be specialising in music in the early Vedic period; otherwise this important duty would not have been assigned to them. Some legends in the Vedic literature make caustic references to women's partiality to music. Thus, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (II. 2. 4.6) describes that once Devas and Asuras both wanted to win over the Goddess of speech; gods succeeded in their effort because they were clever enough to realise that the best way to achieve their object was to sing and dance before them. In the post-Vedic period also society went on encouraging music and dancing in the case of girls. Among the arts which ladies in cultured families were expected to cultivate, the Kāmasūtra assigns the most prominent place to dancing and music, both vocal and instrumental (1, 3, 16). Other arts which they were recommended to master were painting, gardening, garland - making, toy-making, house decorations, etc (1, 3, 1). It is thus evident that care was taken to develop the aesthetic sense of girls.[93]

As far the Purāṇic references on the point, the texts of Vishṇu Purāṇa[94] and Matsya Purāṇa[95]

relate that music and dance of the celestial maidens add to the lustre of Sun's chariot. While describing the splendor of the mythical city of Tripura, the text of Matsya Purāṇa refers to the acting of the maidens, which was a source of recreation of the citizens.[96] The text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa relates that the city, which was made by the prowess of Kāmadhenu for the sage Jamadagni, was resounded with the sound of music of the maidens. Their acting made the people spell-bound. The notes of their songs were as fascinating and delightful as those of the gandharvas. They were proficient in using their fingers to the tune of Vīṇā.[97] There are references to the observance of dance and music on the occasion of vratas or vows. In the Purāṇic view vrata comprises a rule of behaviour based on tradition.[98] Vrata and saṅkalpa are stated to go together. A vrata without saṅkalpa remains crippled. Consequently a number of acts and restriction were prescribed during the period for which the vrata is continued. Observance of dance and music was considered to be parts of the vrata.[99] Thus, the text of Matsya Purāṇa enjoins that on the occasion of Vishnu dvādaśi vrata maidens should be engaged in dance and song.[100] Padma Purāṇa refers to rādhāshṭami vrata. It was observed in the honour of Rādhā, who was born on the bright

eight of Bhādrapada. On this occasion image of Rādhā
was worshipped and dancing and singining of the
maidens took place before the image.[101] In the honour
of Krishna, ashṭami vrata was observed on the dark
eight of Bhādrapada. According to Padma Purāṇa,
if this day is marked by the presence of the constélla-
tion of Rohiṇi, it is an excellent occasion. Provision
is also made for the preparation of figure of Rohiṇi
and moon-god. Reference is also made of the worship
of these figures and singing and dancing by the
maidens before them.[102] The text of Skanda Purāṇa
refers to the vrata observed on the caturdaśi tithi
in the bright Kārttika. On this occasion special
worship of Vishṇu is enjoined. A small pāṇḍāla was
to be erected over the Tulṣoī-plant. Near the root
of the Tulasī plant, Sarvatobhadra figure was to
be drawn. On it a pitcher, with gems inside was
to be placed. Inside the pitcher the figure of Vishṇu
having a conch, disc and mace was to be placed and
worshipped. It is enjoined that, the whole night
should be spent in jāyaraṇa, keeping awake and
devotional songs and dances of the maidens should
be arranged.[103] As far proficiency of the girls
in painting, an interesting reference to it is
available in bāṇāsura legend narrated in Vishṇu
Purāṇa. It is described that the demon Bāṇa had
a daughter, named Ushā. Bāṇa was a devotee of Vishṇu.

It so happend that once Ushā saw Pārvatī sporting with her lord, Śambhu, ushā was inspired with a wish for similar dalliance. Pārvatī, who knows the hearts of all said to Ushā that she should not grieve; the person who will appear to her in a dream on the twelth lunation of the ~~light~~ bright half of Vaiśākha will be her husband. Accordingly, as the goddess had foretold on that lunar day a youth appeared to Ushā in a dream, of whose person she became enamoured. When she woke, and no longer perceived him, she was overcome by sorrow. Unrestrained by modesty, she demanded of her companion whither he had gone. The companion and friend of the princess was Chitralekhā, the daughter of Kubhāṇḍa, the minister of Bāṇa. Usha related to Chitralekhā what had happened and what the goddess had foretold. She also requested her friend to devise some means of uniting her with the person whom she had beheld in the dream. The narrative projects the proficiency of Chitralekhā in the art of painting remarkably well. It is stated that, she delineated the most eminent gods, demons, spirits and mortals and showed them to Usha. Putting aside the portraits of gods, spirits, snake-gods, and demons, the princess selected those of mortals, and amongst them the heroes of the races of Andhaka and Vrishni. When she came to the likeness of Krishna and Rāma, she was confused with shame. From the portrait of Pradyumna she modestly averted her eyes.

But the moment she beneld the picture of his son,
the object of her passion, her eyes wide opened
and all her bashfulness was discarded.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1.   A.S. Altekar, The Position of Women in Hindu
Civilization, p. 3; Geiger, Civilization
of the Eastern Iranians, pp. 53-54.

2.   Atharvaveda, III, 23, VI. 11.

3.   ā te yonim garbha etu pumān bāṇa eveshudhum/
ā vīro'tra jāyatām putraste daśamāsyaḥ//
Atharvaveda, III, 23, 2. This mantra occurs
also in Hiraṇyakeśī-Grihyasūtra, I, 7, 25.1;
for details see P. V. Kane, History of Dharma-
śāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1, p. 203.

3A.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, I. 21, 33-34.

4.   Matsya Purāṇa, 7, 36-45.

5.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 96. 12.

6.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 71. 12.

6A.   aputrasya gatirnāsti svargo naiva ca naiva ca/
yena kenapyupāyena putrasya jananañcaret//
Caruḍa Purāṇa, II, 3.10.

7.   śubhakarmaṇi vā vipra paitrike vāpi karmaṇi/
Skanda Purāṇa, II. 1.42.

8.   aputrāṇām grihāṇīva śmaśānasadrisāni hi/
pitarastasya naśnānti devatāḥ ṛishibhiḥ saha//
Skanda Purāṇa, V. 3, 169.17, 18.

9.   Yaḥ putrārtham vratam kuryāt śāstriko bhīshma-

pañcakam pradatvā pāpapurusham varshamadhye
sutam labhet/
ibid, II. 4. 32, 12.

10.   B.S. Upadhyaya, India in Kālidāsa, p. 192.

11.   nūnam mattah param vamsyāh piṇḍavichheda-
darśinah/na prakāmabhujah śrāddhe svadhāsaṅgra-
hatatparāh//
Raghuvamśa, 1, 66.

12.   matparah durlabham matvā nūnamāvarjitam mayā/
payah purvaih svanihsvāsaih kavashṇamupabhuñ-
jate// ibid 1. 67.

13.   so'hamijyāvisuddhātmā prajālopanimīlitāh/
prakāsaścāprakāsasca lokāloka ivācalah//
lokāntarasukham puṇyam tapodānasamudbhavam/
santatih śuddhavamśyā hiparatreha ca śarmaṇe//
Raghuvamśa, 1. 68-69.

14.   aho dushyantasya samsayamārudhāpiṇḍabhājāh,
kutaha asmatparam vata yathāśrutisamṛritāni/
ka nah kule nivāpanāni karishyatiti//
nūnam prasūtivikalena mayā prasiktam/
dhautāsruśeshamudakam pitarah pivanti//
Abhijñānaśakuntalam, V. 1, 24.

14A.   atha ya ichhedduhitā me paṇḍitā jāyeta,
tilaudanau pācayitvā aśnīyātāmiti,
Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad, IV, 4. 18.

15. Altekar, Op Cit., p. 4.

16. Ibid, p. 4.

17. rājanbhakto'si me nityam dāsyāmi tvām sutām

    sadā/tām dattām matprasādena prapsyasi

    śobhanām//

    Matsya Purāṇa, 208.8.

18. Ibid, 29. 1-18.

19. Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV, 2.101-111.

20. Ibid, III. 11. 69 ff.

21. Ibid, 1. 15.7.

22. Ibid, IV. 1. 21.

23. daśaputrasamā kanyā yā na syāchhīlavarjitā,

    Matsya Purāṇa, 154, 157.

24. daśaputrasamā kanyā ya syāchhīlavatī śubhāh,

    Padma Purāṇa, Śrishṭikhaṇḍa, 40. 156.

25. Vishṇudharma, Chapter 30; R.C. Hazra, Studies

    in Upa-Purāṇas, Vol. 1, p. 123, n. 42.

26. Devībhagavata, Skandha IX. 4.33.

26A. Rāmāyaṇa, VI. 131, 38 and 61; Altekar, Op.

    Cit., p. 9.

27. Devibhāgavata, Skandha IX. Chapter 16.

28. Ibid, Chapter 17

29. Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 13. 55-56.

30. Altekar, Op. Cit., p. 9.

31. Liṅga Purāṇa, II. 34.

32. punnāmno narakāt trāti iti putrītvihoktitaḥ,

    ibid, 1, 5.31.

33. Altekar, Op Cit., p. 7.

34. avabhṛithamavayanti parā sthālīrasyanti
     udvāyavyāni haranti tasmāt striyam jātam
     parāsyanti utpumānsam haranti.,
     Taittiriya Samhitā, VI, 5.10.3; Kane, History
     of Dharmaśastra, Vol. II, pt. 1, p. 509.

35. Altekar, Op Cit. p. 8.

36. Matsya Purāṇa, 30. 12.

37. Vishṇu Purāṇa, II. 6.9.

38. Brahmanda Purāṇa, II, 23.66.

39. Liṅga Purāṇa, I, 78.18.

40. Branmavaivartta Purāṇa, Śrikrishṇa janmakhaṇḍa,
     86. 21-23.

41. Ibid, 17. 119-122.

42. Skanda Purāṇa, II. 1, 3.22.

43. Ibid, VII. 205, 82-84.

44. Samskāra Prakāśa, p. 768.

45. R.B. Pandey, Hindu Samskāras, p. 241.

46. Skanda Purāṇa, VII, 205. 82-84.

46A. Kane, History of Dharmaśastra, Vol. II, pt. 1,
     p. 441.

47. maṭacīhateshu kurushushātikyā saha jāyayoshaste-
     rha cākrāyaṇa ibhyagrāme pradānaka uvās/
     Chandogya upanishad, 1, 10.1. anupajātapayodha-
     rādistrivyañjanayā - Śaṁkara

47A. Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 198.37.

48. Ibid, IV. 40. 34-35.

49. Ibid, VII. 166. 19.

50. Vrishalīsūtipcshṭā vrishalīpatireva ca,
     Vishṇu Purāṇa, III. 15.8.

51. Devī Purāṇa, Chapters 4-8.

52. Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 61-68.

53. jambavatim nāma kanyām .... arghyabhūtām
     grāhayāmāsa,
     Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 13, 55.

54. gāndinīm kanyām ... arghyabhūtām pradāt,
     ibid, IV, 13, 125.

55. Brahma Purāṇa, II. 16. 32.

56. kanyādānam tu bhogadam,
     Śiva Purāṇa, Vidyeswara saṃhitā, 15. 57.

57. Brahma Purāṇa, 47. 86-87.

57A. janakasyāśvamedhe ... grāmaratnāni dāsīsca,
     Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, I, 34. 36-39.

58. Yā tu kanyā svapitrādyaiḥ śivadharme niyojitā/
     sā bhaktāya pradātavyā nāparāya virodhine//
     Śiva Purāṇa, VII. 2, 15. 66-67.

59. Skanda Purāṇa, V. 1, 53. 23.

60. devadāsī brahmṇadāsī svatantra śudradāsikā/
     dāsi caturvidhā proktā dve cādye kshatriyasame//
     anyā veśyāṅganātulyā tadanyā hīnajātivat/
     Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 4.8, 11-12.

61. Śiva Purāṇa, 1, 2, 8.54; 70-71.

62. U.N. Ghoshal in Classical Age, p. 568.

63.   T. Watters, On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India, II, p. 254.

64.   Kātyāyanasmṛitisāroddhāra quoted by Aparārka, p. 789; for details see Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. III, p. 485.

65.   Nārada-Smṛiti, V. 37.

66.   IBid, V. 39.

67.   Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. III, p. 714.

68.   Āpastamba Dharmasūtra, II. 6. 143.

69.   Manu Smṛiti, IX. 130.

70.   Ṛigveda, I. 124.7.

71.   mamaivam pitṛidhanamityatīva ca satyabhāmā'pi spṛihayāñcakara ... pitṛidhanam caitatsatyabhāmāyā nānysyaitad. Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 13, 151-54.

72.   sudyumnastu ... stripūrvakādrajyalābham na lekhe Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 1.15. kanyābhāvāttu sudyumno nainam bhāgamavapnuyāt. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 3. 60.21 Vāyu Purāṇa, 85. 21.

73.   Devī Purāṇa, Chapter 35

74.   Ibid, Chapter 89.

75.   Ibid, Chapters 99-101.

75A. Devībhāgavata, Skandha III, Chapter 27.

76.   Altekar, Op Cit. pp. 9-10.

77.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, 1. 10-19.

78.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 30. 28-29.

79.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 13, 30.

80.   Altekar, Op Cit. pp. 10-11.

81.   brihaspate bhagīnī bhuvanā brahmavādinī/
       yogasiddhā jagatkritsnamasaktā vicaratyut//
       Vāyu Purāṇa, 66. 27.

82.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 2.28.

83.   anujñāpya guruñcaiva vicaret pṛithvīmām/
       sārabhūtamupāsita jñānam yajjñeyasādhakam/
       Vāyu Purāṇa, 17.2

84.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 72. 13-15

85.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III. 10. 15-16

86.   pitṛikārye niyuktatvādabhavad brahmavādinī
       Matsya Purāṇa, 20, 27.

87.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 35, 13-14

88.   Chandogya Upanishad, I, 11,4.

89.   Yā sā, dehārdhasaṁbhūtā gāyatrī brahmavādinī
       Śatarūpā śatendriyā
       Matsya Purāṇa, 4. 24.

90.   Devvībhāgavata· Skandha IX, Chapter 16.

91.   Vishṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa, Chapter 98.

92.   eteshām pīvarī kanyā mānasī divi visrūtā/
       yogini yogamātā ca tapastepe sudāruṇam/
       Matsya Purāṇa, 15. 5-6.

93.   Altekar, Op Cit. 20-21.

94.   Vishṇu Purāṇa II. 10. 20.

95.   Matsya Purāṇa, 26. 26.

96.   Ibid, 131. 9.

97.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III. 27. 708

98.   śāstrodito hi niyame vratam

      Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1, 128. 1.

99.   For details see Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra,

      Vol. V, pt. 1, pp. 1-60.

100. Matsya Purāṇa, 82. 29.

101. Padma Purāṇa, Brahmakhaṇḍa, 7, 16-81.

102. Ibid, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 32. 41-48.

103. Skanda Purāṇa, II, 4, 34, 6 ff.

104. Vishnu Purāṇa, V. 32

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MARRIAGE

In connection with the problem of evolution of marriage Altekar observes that, being of "hoary antiquity" Hindu literature has naturally preserved some traces of promiscuity in prehistoric times. The noted scholar contents that there are a few passages in the text of Mahābhārata showing that a state promiscuity may not have been an impossibility at an early period. She also observes that these passages have a context and are not to be taken at their face value. In the said passage of Mahābhārata, Śarmishthā states that there is no difference between one's own husband and the husband of a friend.[1] Altekar notes that this is an argument advanced by a woman driven into desperation by the unnatural punishment of eternal maidenhood inflicted upon her. He has also quoted another noteworthy passage of the Mahābhārata mentioning that in the land Uttarakurus and in the city of Māhishmatī the institution of marriage did not exist.[2] Another passage of Mahābhārata mentions that, it was the sage Śvetaketu who decreed that promiscuity should be supplanted by regular marriage.[3] Altekar finally concludes that the traces of promiscuity that we get in the epic have to be referred to pre-Vedic times, for we find the institution of marriage well established in the Rigveda.[4]

'Without deviating very much from the above observations of Altekar, we are coming to the Purāṇic view of the circumstances in which promiscuity or indiscriminate mingling and free sexual relations figure in the society affecting adversely its well-established order. In this context, the Purāṇas give a dismal picture of the society due to the influence of the Kali Age. According to Vishnu-Purana, the age is characterized by the intrusion of the foreigness, and as a result of the intermingling of the people with these castless and immoral intrudess immorality will spread and there will be no regard for the Śrauta and Smārta Dharma. Passion will be the sole bond between the sexes, women will be objects merely of sexual gratification, mutual assent will be marriage.[5] In describing the evils of Kali age, the text of Skanda Purāṇa goes a step further. It is related that, in this age a brother might have sexual relationships with his own sister and the father with his daughter.[6] The text Brahma Purāṇa states that, in the Kali age the women will leave their husband when the latter becomes poor.[7] Thus, in the Purāṇic view promiscuity is a social evil. It comes over a result of dismemberment of age-old Varṇāśrama order. In fact the Purāṇa-passages do not refer to the existence of promiscuity in the society. Their reference is simply to its possibility

in the circumstances of unrestrained morality. The
real import of the Purāṇa-passages has to be inter-
preted in the light of the observation of Kane on
the above-mentioned passage of Mahābhārata. It has
been shown that the passage rather gives expression
to what the poet imagined about the remotest ages
and not what he knew was the real state of society
thousand of years before him.[8] Even the theory of
an original state of promiscuity once advanced by
several sociologists has now ceased to be respectable.[9]

The tradition, which is preserved in the
Purāṇa-texts reveals that marriage was regarded
as a social and religious obligation. It has been
pointed out that, this was the case even in the
Indo-Iranian period.[10] Thus, Avestā enjoins that
oblations offered unto gods or ancestors by a maiden
or a bachelor are unacceptable to them.[11] Among
the Vedic texts, a passage of Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
is generally quoted. It regards an unmarried person
as unholy.[12] A passage of Aitareya Brāhmaṇa relates
that the wife is called "Jāyā" because the husband
is born in the wife as son.[13] The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
enjoins that 'The wife' is indeed half of oneself;
therefore as long as a man does not secure a wife
so long he does not beget a son and so he is till
then not complete; but when he secures a wife he gets

progeny and then he becomes complete.[14] The general credence as the Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra states, was that there can be no separation between husband and wife; for since marriage they have to perform religious acts jointly.[15]

Similar details are available in the Purāṇa-texts. Thus, the Vishṇu Purāṇa states that after finishing his studies and giving the parting donation to his preceptor, the man who wishes to lead the life of a householder must take a wife. If he does not propose to enter into the married state, he may remain as a student with his teacher, first making a vow to that effect, and employ himself in the service of his preceptor and of the preceptor's descendants; or he may become a hermit or adopt the order of the religious mendicant, according to his original determination. The text emphasizes that the householder who espouses a female connected with him by similarity of religious and civil obligations, and alongwith her discharges the duties of his condition, derives from such a wife great benefits.[16] The text of Brahmāṇda Purāṇa enjoins that only that person is fit for abhisheka, who is accompanied by appropriate wife.[17] According to Matsya Purāṇa only that Brāhmaṇa is fit for receiving alms, who is accompanied by wife.[18] In

another context, the text of Matsya Purāṇa states
that participation of wife (in religious observances)
has been ~~decreased~~ decreed by the seers as the obligation
recommended by śruti.[19] The text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa
relates the story of Mātaṅga, who was a friend of
the mountain Himālaya. He practised severe penances
in order to procure a daughter as beautiful as Gaurī,
the daughter of Himālaya. During the course of his
penances, Mātaṅga was accompanied by his wife; who
is called sadharmiṇī.[20] In the texts of Vāyu and
Brahmāṇḍa, the act of lifting up the earth from
the ocean by Varāha has been compared with the
peformance of Yajña. It is narrated that on this
occasion he was accompanied by his wife Chāyā
(chayapatnīsahāyo).[21] Both these texts refer to
a Yajña performed in the Naimishāraṇya by Tapa,
who was accompanied by his wife Ilā.[22] The text
of Vāyu Purāṇa relates that Kaśyapa was accompanied
by his wife Diti, on the occasion of performance
of Aśvamedha by the former in the Pushker Tīrtha.[23]
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa mentions that king Sagara accomplished
his sacrificial bath along with his wife.[24] Matsya
Purāṇa enjoins that entrance into sacrificial hall
along with wife leads to auspicious results.[25] Besides
sacrifice, presence of wife was desirable also on
other ceremonial occasions. Thus, the text of Brahmāṇḍa

Purāṇa relates that Brahmā, Vishṇu, Maheśa and other various gods worship Śrīdevatā along with their wives.[26] Matsya Purāṇa relates that, when the demon Vajrāṅga was observing severe penances without taking any meal, his wife was sitting on the embankment of the pond in a speechless posture.[27] Vāyu Purāṇa enjoins that, while offering oblation to fire on the occasion of Śrāddha, a person should be accompanied by his wife.[28]

The purpose of marriage was to enable a man, by becoming householder, to perform sacrifices to the gods and to procreate sons. Statement to the above effect is available at a number of places in the Ṛigveda including III, 53.4; V, 3.2; V, 28.3 and X, 85.36. It has been observed that, when Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra, II, 5.11.12, forbids taking a second wife if the first is endowed with progeny and the performance religious rites, it indicates that the main purposes of marriage are two: viz. the wife enables a man to perform religious rites and is mother of a son or sons who were supposed to save a man from hell.[29] Manusmṛiti states that on the wife depend the procreation of sons, the performances of religious rites, service, highest pleasure, heaven for onself and for one's ancestors.[30] Works of

Kālidāsa reveal that marriage was a necessary rite
to be performed by every dvija. The stage of house-
holder was regarded as the most important of the
four āsramas, since it fed the rest of them, and
therefore a brahmacārī, who had acquired a knowledge
of the fourteen sciences, settled down as a married
householder.[31]

In the Purāna-tradition also the underlying
motive of marriage is said to be procreation of
progeny. According to Vishnu Purāna, a person behaving
otherwise was supposed to be shorn of lustre.[32]
The text refers to the maiden called Mārishā. She
was nourished by king Soma. She was married to
Prācetasas for the multiplication of the race.[33]
The same text relates the story of Daksha and the
purpose of his marriage with Asiknī, the daughter
of the patriarch Vīrana. It is narrated that, finding
that his mind-progeny did not multiply themselves,
Daksha determined, in order to secure their increase,
to establish sexual intercourse as the means of
multiplication. For this purpose he espoused Asiknī
a damsel addicted to devout practices, the eminent
supportress of the world.[34] The Purāna-texts even
prescribe rituals for the procreation of progeny
after marriage. According to Matsya Purāna, if a
woman does not conceive, or her children die, or she

gets abortion; she should worship seven women, having their husband living. These women should then give the woman a bath.[35] According to Agni Purāṇa, the woman in question should be given both in a lake full of lotuses, or she should be given bath near the Aśoka tree.[36] Thus, the general tendency of the Purāṇa-texts is to lay stress on the necessity of married life with a view to procreating and multiplying the progeny of the race and family. It is for this obvious reason, that the Purāṇa-texts like the Dharmaśāstra works attempt to glorify the status of a house-holder, i.e., Gṛihasthāśrama. The passages of Vishṇu Purāṇa,[37] Vāyu Purāṇa[38] and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa[39] tend to show that the order of the house-holder was regarded as the most distinguished. It was considered to be the never-centre of other āśramas and even superior to all of them.

It has been observed that rules for the selection of the bride are far more elaborate than those for selecting a bridegroom, though in some respects they are the same.[40] The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa gives expression to the then view that broad hips and slender waists make woman more attractive.[41] Aśvalāyana Gṛihya Sūtra states that one should marry a girl who is endowed with intelligence, beauty,

a good character and auspicious characteristics
and who is healthy.[42] Śāṅkhāyana Gṛihya Sūtra requires
that the girl should be possessed of auspicious
lakshaṇas. These lakshaṇas are of two kinds, bāhya
(visible or bodily characteristics) and abhyantara
(invisible).[43] Manusmṛiti points out that one should
not marry a girl having tawny hair or having an
excessive limb (such as sixth finger) or a deficient
limb, who is hairless or very hairy, who is talkative
and has yellowish eyes; but should marry a girl
who has limbs void of any defect, whose gait is
like that of a swan or an elephant, the hair on whose
head or body is of slight growth and whose teeth
are small, whose body is delicate.[44] Manusmṛiti
also observes that the girl to be married must not
bear names of lunar mansions (such as Revatī, Ārdrā
etc), trees or rivers, she must not bear a mlecCha
name or that of a mountain, of a bird, of a snake
or of a slave or a name that is terrific.[45]

Coming to the account of the Purāṇas, we
find a detailed description of the lakshaṇas of
a bride to be selected for marriage in the text
of Vishṇu Purāṇa. It states that a person should
select a maiden who has not too much hair, but is
not without any; one who is not very black nor yellow

complexioned, and who is not from birth a criple or
deformed. He must not marry a girl who is vicious
or unhealthy, of low origin, or labouring under
disease; one who is ill brought up; one who talks
improperly; one who inherits some malady from father
or mother, one who has a beard or who is of masculine
appearance; one who speaks thick and thin, or croaks
like a raven; one who keeps her eyes shut, or has
the eyes very prominent; one who has hairy legs
or thick ancles; or one who has dimples in her cheeks
when she laughs. It is added that a wise and prudent
man should not marry a girl of such a description.
He should not wed a girl of harsh skin; or one with white
nails; or one with red eyes, or with very fat hands
and feet; or one who is a dwarf, or one who is very
tall; or one whose eyebrows meet, or whose teeth
are far apart, and resemble tusks.[46] According to
Padma Purāṇa the bride should not be very short
nor very tall, should not have profuse hair on the
body, nor should be devoid of good hair on the head;
her eye-brows should not be touching each other
at the inner ends; she should not have a name
indicating a river, serpent, mountain a tree or
that of birds.[47] Skanda Purāṇa enjoins that a girl
having a name of a goodess, or a river, should be
avoided. It narrates that a Brāhmaṇa named Nārāyaṇa

met with sudden death, after he married two daughters of a sage, who were named Bhavānī and Gautamī.[48] The same text further relates that a person marrying a girl having very short hair, or being very tall or very short, dies within six months.[49]

As regards the age of marriage for girls, it has been observed that in the Rigveda there are no clear statements about the exact age when girls were married.[50] In Rigveda, X. 27.12 it is said 'when a bride is fine looking and well adorned, she by herself seeks her friend from among men.' That shows that girls were grown - up enough to select their husbands. Some of the verses in marriage hymn (such as Rigveda X. 85, 26-27, 46) indicate that married girls could not have been child-wives, but must have been grown up. In Rigveda I. 51, 13 Indra is said to have given to old Kakshīvat a wife named Vṛicayā who is styled 'arbha' (young). But the word is only used in contradistinction to the word 'mahate' (grown old) applied to Kakshīvat and conveys no idea of her exact age. With reference to the above passage and many others of the kind, Kane concludes that in the period of Rigveda girls were probably married at any age (either before or after puberty) and sometimes remained spinsters

all their life.[51] During the period of grihya and dharma sūtras, from several considerations, girls were married just before the time of puberty or immediately after it. Thus, Gautama Dharma Sūtra enjoins that a girl should be given in marriage before she attains the age of puberty. He who neglects it commits sin.[52] Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra recommends that a girl must be married early and may be given even to one who is devoid of qualities.[53] It has been shown that from about 600 B.C. to about the beginning of the Christian Era it did not matter at all if a girl was married a few months or a few years after puberty. But by about 200 A.D. popular feeling had become insistent on pre-puberty marriages. It is added that this change was possibly due to the following circumstances. Buddhism had spread far and wide during these centuries with its encouragement of the institution of monks and nuns. There was laxity of morals among nuns. Girls had generally ceased to study anything, though some of them did study in the times of Pānini and Patanjali, and so society did not like girls to remain doing nothing. From the times of the Rigveda (X. 85. 40-41) there was a mystical belief that Soma, Gandharva and Agni were the divine guardian of a girl and the Grihyasaṅgraha (quoted in the commentary on Gobhila grihya sūtra III. 4.6) says that Soma enjoys

a girl first, then Gandharva enjoys her when her
breasts develop and fire when she menstruates.
Therefore, a feeling arose that a girl must be married
even before she develops any distinct signs of
femininity. Further, since marriage came to be looked
upon as the Upanayana in the case of women, naturally
the age of upanayana (8th year) came to be looked
upon as the proper age of marriage.[54]

    Coming to the evidence of the Purāṇa-texts,
it is noticeable that the text of Skanda Purāṇa
enjoins that twelve is the proper age for marriage
in case of a girl. In the Purāṇa tradition, the
best period of a woman's life is believed to be
when she is between eight and twelve years of age.
The text of Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa narrates that
gopa Nanda saw Rādhā a girl of twelve, having steady
youth;[55] when the old maiden Kubjā, with a hunch-back,
was made young by Kṛishṇa by his touch, she appeared
like an attractive girl of twelve;[57] king Kārtavīrya
saw in his dream that a girl of twelve, decked with
all ornaments, went away from his house being angry;
this indicated the loss of all glory and wealth
for him.[58] In the chapter on position of girls, we
have taken into account the Purāṇa-passages applying
various epithets, according to the age, in the case

of girls. It has been shown a girl of eight (or seven) was called gaurī, of nine Rohiṇī, of ten Kanyā; after that she is called Rajasvalā (menstruating). The text of Skanda Purāṇa enjoins that a girl should be married before she becomes a Rajasvalā.[59] As a matter of fact the Purāṇic injunction, in respect of marriage of a girl, is well in consonance with the Dharmaśāstric one. Thus, the text of Padma Purāṇa enjoins that the age of marriage in case of the bride, the best is when she is eight years old; because when she shows the pubic hair, the god Soma enjoys her; at the advent of the menstruation - fluid the Gadharvas enjoy her; when the breasts begin to show Agni enjoys her; hence a girl should be married prior to her reaching the period of menstruation, and when she is eight years of age.[60] The text of Skanda Purāṇa gives the same account. It also adds that a girl who begins the 'period' is called nagnikā; hence a girl should be married when she is anagnikā to gain the real benefit of kanyādāna.[61] The text of Brahma Purāṇa records another practice. It states that a girl should be married after the age of four and before she reaches her tenth year; she should be got married as long as she does not know the bashfulness and plays in dust.[62] According to Vishṇu Purāṇa after completing his

studenthood period, one should marry a maiden who
is of a third of his age.[63] The commentator of Vishnu
Purāṇa observes that by this is to be understood
a young girl, but at the same time one not immature;
for otherwise a man of thirty, by which age he
completes his Sacred studies would espouse a girl
of but ten years.

As regards forms of marriage, the gṛihyasūtras,
dharmasūtras and smṛitis lay down that the forms
of marriage are eight, viz. Brāhma, Daiva, Ārsha,
Prājapatya, Āsura, Gāndharva Rākshasa and Paiśāca.[64]
The gift of a daughter, after decking her (with
valuable garments) and honouring her by presents
of jewels, to a man learned in the Veda and of good
conduct, whom (the father) himself invites is called
the Prāhma rite. The gift of a daughter who has
been decked with ornaments to a priest who duly
officiates at a sacrifice, during the course of
its performance, they call it the Daiva rite. When
(the father) gives away his daughter, according
to the rule, after receiving from the bridegroom,
for (the fulfilment of) the sacred law, a cow and
a bull or two pairs, that is named as the Ārsha
rite. When (the bridegroom) receives a maiden, after
having given as much wealth as he can afford to

the kinsmen and to the bride herself, according
to his own will, that was called the Āsura rite.
The voluntary union of a maiden and her lover was
called Gāndharva rite. It springs from desire and
has sexual intercourse for its purpose. The forcible
abduction of a maiden from her home, while she cries
out and weep, after her kinsmen have been slain
or wounded and their houses broken open, was called
Rākshasā rite. When a man by stealth seduces a girl
who is sleeping, intoxicated, or disordered in
intellect was the eighth one. It was considered
to be the most base and sinful rite of the Pisācas.[65]

Coming to the Puranic records we find that,
in close consonance with the dharmasāstric injunction
noted above the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa states that
the forms of marriage are eight, namely, the Brāhma,
Daiva, Ārsha, Prājāpatya, Āsura, Gāndharva and Paisāca.
About the last one, it is remarked that of all the
forms this one is the worst. The text also adds
that the householder who espouses a female connected
with him by similarity of religious and civil
obligations, and along with her discharges the duties
of his condition, derives from such a wife great
benefits.[66]

Other Puranas like Agni (154.9-11), Padma
(233.21-30) and Garuda (I. 95.7) also describe that
forms of marriage are eight. They also give the
details of these forms as under : (1) Brahma, in
which the girl is ritually given to a suitable person
who has good family background and possess good
moral character, (2) Daiva, where the girl is given
to a priest officiating at a sacrifice, (3) Arsha,
in which the girl is given to a suitable person,
having good family background and possessing good
moral character, alongwith a pair of cow and bull,
(4) Prajapatya, in which the girl is given to one
who asks for her, (5) Gandharva, where the bride
and the bridegroom settle the marriage with mutual
consent, (6) Asura, where the girl is given for
money; it is the lower type, (7) Rakshasa, wherein
the bride is forcibly taken away in a flight, (8)
Paisaca, shen the girl is taken away with torture
or deception. In this connection, the text of Garuda
Purana states that the first four are praiseworthy
and are meant for the Brahmana; the next two are
acceptable for the Kshatriya, likewise the Asura
is for the Vaisya, while the last one is meant for
the Sudra.[67]

In the text of Skanda Purana, the number
of forms of marriage is increased to ten. These are

enumerated | as under : Prājapatya, Brāhma, Daiva, Ārsha, Gāndharva, Āsura, Rākshasa, Paiśāca, Prātibha and Ghātana.[68] It also states that nothing should be taken for the girl in return and adds that even the Ārsha form wherein a pair of cow and bull is accepted for the girl is equal to selling of girl.[69] In this connection S.A. Dange[70] draws our attention to the difference of opinion as to whether the pair is to be given to or taken is old, the Manusmṛiti, III, 29. says that it should be taken from him. The noted scholar also refers to Manusmriti III. 53 without giving the content of the concerned verse. The verse relates, "Some call the cow and the bull (given) at an Ārsha wedding 'a gratuity'; (but) that is wrong since (the acceptance of) a fee, be it small or great, is a sale (of the daughter)." Dange, however, has not taken any notice of the subsequent verse, which qualifies the earlier verse, and as such it justifies the śulka or fee taken by the guardians of the daughter at the time of the wedding. The verse relates, "When the relatives do not appropriate (for their use) the gratuity (given), it is not a sale; (in that case) the gift is only a token of respect and kindness towards the maidens.

While the text of Skanda Purāṇa increases
the number from eight to ten, the text of Brahmāṇḍa
Purāṇa reduces it to four. It mentions four unique
types and calls them Udvāha. It mentions four types
of wives, namely, (1) Kāla-krītā, purchased for
a particular time or due to particular time, (2)
Kraya-krītā, purchased outright, (3) Pitṛidattā,
given by parents, and (4) Svayamyutā, United of
her own accord. It is also enjoined that the first
is the prostitute, the second is slave, the svayamyutā
is the one married according to the gāndharva marriage,
and she is also called yuktā; and the pitṛidattā
is termed bhāryā, 'wife'.[71]

We may illustrate some instances of the above-
mentioned forms of marriage available in the Purāṇa-
texts. Thus, the texts of Viṣṇu Purāṇa,[72] Vāyu
Purāṇa,[73] Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa[74] and Matsya Purāṇa[75] relate
the love-affair of Purūravā and Urvaśī, which
ultimately culminated in marriage. The texts of
Vāyu Purāṇa[76] and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa[77] relate the
story of Śatarūpā, the maiden who selected Manu
as her husband according to her own choice. Viṣṇu
Purāṇa narrates that Pradyumna procured the daughter
of Rukmī in svyamvara.[78] In the same text we come
across the story how Kāśiraja arranged svyamvara for

the marriage of his daughter on latter's insistence.[79]

The Kālikā Purāṇa relates the story of Vasishtha's marriage with Arundhatī. It is said that Sandhyā was the mind-born daughter of Brahmā. She deemed herself polluted by the influence of Kāma as well as by the amorous glances of Brahmā and his mind-born sons. Consequently she determined to expiate her sin. On the advice of Vasishṭha she practised penance on the Candrabhaga mountain at the side of a beautiful lake named Bṛihallohita. She begam to worship Vishṇu with the mantra 'Om namo Vāsudevaya Om'. She threw her body, which was converted into a cake into the sacrifice instituted by Medhātithi and was reborn as the daughter of the latter. After she had received instructions from Sāvitrī, Gāyatrī, Sarasvatī, Drupadā and Bahulā on chastity, she fell in love with Vasishṭha and was duly married to him.[80] The marriage narrated in this story may probably be put into the category of gāndharva form in which, as Altekar observes the parties fall in love with each other and immediately proceed to consumate their contemplated marriage. Referring to Deval quoted by Kullūka on Manusmṛiti, VIII, 226, he further observese that the ritual in this form has to be performed after the union.[81] Next to this narrative of Kālikā Purāṇa,

we are illustrating a passage of Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa. It is distinguished from the famous Vashṇava Mahāpurāṇa called Bhāvata. The present one is an interesting upapurāṇa dealing with the praise of Devī and her worship. Sati-Śiva episode is available in this text in an amended form. It narrates that, as a result of Daksha's penance Devī was born as Satī having eight handsṣ and fair complexion. She chose Śiva as her husband by placing the garland meant for selection of husband on the ground after pronouncing the words 'Śivāya Namaḥ'. Subsequently she was married to Śivc.[82] The account is an instance of svyamvara. On the authority of the commentary of Vīramitrodaya on Yājñavalkya-smṛti, Kane observes that svyamvara was practically the gāndharva form.[82A] The text of Devībhāgavata Purāṇa narrates the story of Sudarśana, eldest son of Dhruvasandhi, king of Kośala. He was deprived of the throne after his father's death by Yudhajit, the maternal grandfather of his step-brother Satrujit, took shelter in Bharadvāja's hermitage, won Devī's favour by muttering the syllable "klim", became fortunate enough to see Vaishṇavī Śakti even in his childhood, and was able to recover his kingdom by marrying Sasikala, daughter of Subāhu, king of Kāśī in a svayamvara.[83] In another context, the text of Devībhagavata relates

the story of Gaṅgā's origin from the bodies of Kṛishṇa and Rādhā liquefied by Śiva's song on Krishṇa during the Rāsotsava on the Kārttikī Paurṇamāsī. It further narrates Rādha's rage against Gaṅgā, and her intention to drink the latter up; Gaṅgā's entrance into Krishṇa's feet; Brahmā's imparting of the Rādhikā-mantra to Gaṅgā; Gaṅgā's worship of Rādhā according to the directions of the Sāmaveda, and her passing to Vaikuṇṭha; Brahma's taking into his Kamaṇḍalu the water from which Gaṅgā came out. Then, it narrates Brahmāṇḍa's request to Vishṇu to accept Gaṅgā as his wife, and Vishṇu's consequent marraige with Gaṅgā according to the Gāndharva form.[84] In the text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, there is an account of two cases of marraige; in which sex-relationship is given precedence over actual performance of marraige. These two may be put into the category of a variety of gāndharva form. It is stated that a girl may be allowed to have sexual intercourse with a person, with the permission of her parents though without marriage rituals; but in that case, the man who commits the act would be purified after a fast for three days, and that too if he marries her alone. As regards the second case it is narrated that, if a girl is married to a person, after having sexual relationship with another known to her parents, she does not become a widow if her husband dies;

she goes and stays with the person who first had intercourse with her.[85] The text of Kalikā Purāṇa refers to the marriage of ṚicĪka with Satyavatī. It is related that Satyavatī was daughter of the sone-less king Gāḍhi of Kānyakubja. Bhṛigu's son ṚicĪka married Satyavatī, by presenting to him, as nuptial fee, one thousand moon-white horses of a particular description, which he had procured by pleasing Varuṇa for the purpose.[86] This marriage may be put into the category of Ārsha form. According to the Dharmaśāstric tradition, when there is a gift of one's daughter, after taking one pair of cattle (a cow and a bull) or two pairs only as a matter of fulfilling the law (and not as a sale of the girl), that is named the Ārsha form.[87] Now, we proceed to illustrate a passage of Bhavishyottara Purāṇa. Generally speaking the authoritative character of this text is held in doubt, because it is not included in any of the lists of eighteen Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas known to us. But, as Hazra shows, this exclusion has not stood in the way of its recognition as an authoritative work. The Smṛiti-writers also regard it as a Purāṇic work. For instance, Hemadri, Mādhavācārya, Anantabhaṭṭa and Mitra Mishra regard it as a 'Purāṇa'. According to Narasiṃha Vājapeyin it is an Upapurāṇa and a part of the

Bhavishya Purāṇa, Hazra also observed that it was compiled towards the end of the 8th century A.D.[88] Kane shows that, the Bhavishyottara cannot be dated later than 1000 A.D.[89] Thus, we shall not be on erring side in utilizing the evidence of ~~of~~ Bhavishyottara Purāṇa in the spirit of our note. The text praises a person, who gives one's daughter or a helpless girl to a worthy bridegroom either of the same caste as that of the girl or of a higher one, without accepting any money from the bridegroom.[90] The statement of of Bhavishyottara Purāṇa in this context is well in tune with the Dharmaśāstric injunction. Altekar observes that the writers of Dharmaśāstra literature almost lose their temper in condemning the custom of bride-price.[91] Baudhāyana warns the guardians that they will go to the most terrible hell if they sell their daughters in marriage, and points out to the husband that a purchased bride would not become a legal wife at all.[92] The text of Padma Purāṇa advises that even the face of a person, who has sold his daughter in marriage, should not be seen.[93]

We now come to the Purāṇic references to remarriage of women and the analysis of such references in the light of external evidences. It has been observed that widow remarriage prevailed in the

Vedic society. Passages of Ṛigveda (X. 18.8) and Atharvaved IX, 5.27-28) have been cited in support. In the subsequent periods, there are also evidences with reference to the possibility of remarriage. Thus the Vasishtha-dharmasūtra enjoins that even a Brāhmaṇa lady with living children need wait for five years, if her husband, gone out on a journey, does not return. If she is unwilling to go to him, she should not wed outside the family, if there is an eligible person within it (XVII, 67). The custom, however, came into disrepute later on. Thus, the evidence of Mahābhārata shows that, when urged to make peace on the last day of the war, Duryodhana says that he is disclined to enjoy the earth as a man is to marry a widow (IX. 31, 45). In the later stages ascetic ideals grew up. Resistance to remarriage of women became stronger. Manu lays down that a woman should never even think of remarriage (V, 157). Nārada enoins that, girls are married only once (XII, 28). In another context, however, Nārada allows a woman to remarry in case her husband is untraceable, or has expired, or has entered a monestary, or has become misfit for procreating progeny (XII. 97). Parāśara holds similar view (IV, 23). It has been observed that, although remarriage of women in Bramaṇa community was getting unpopular; yet it was still common among other classes.[94]

· Coming to the Purāṇic view of remarriage of women, we start with the term 'punarbhū' used in the text of Skanda Purāṇa.[95] The context shows that its sense is quite different from 'punarbhava' used in the sense of rebirth in Sanskrit texts (e.g. Abhijñānśakuntalam VI. 36). The text of Skanda Purāṇa shows that the term 'punarbhūs' indicated a woman who had an earlier husband, or one whose chastity has been spoilt. It is stated that ghosts stay in a house where there is such a woman. In the Smṛti tradition three categories of "punarbhūs" are mentioned. These are as under; (a) a maiden whose hand was taken in marriage but whose marriage was not consummated; in her case the marriage ceremony has to be performed once more; (b) a woman who deserts the husband of her youth, betakes herself to another man and then returns to the house of her husband; (c) a woman who is given by the husband's relatives (when the husband dies) to a sapiṇḍa of the deceased husband or a person of the same caste, on failure of brothers-in-law. The last one, lower,. is a case of niyoga.[95A] In this connection S.A. Dange draws our attention to a passage of Agni Purāṇa which states that a girl is "given" only once; and whosoever usurps her deserves punishment like a thief.[96] To this observation of Dange, it may be added that the above norm was well known to the Purāṇa tradition.

Reference to this effect is available in the text
of Matsya Purāṇa, which is known to have been composed
earlier than Agni Purāṇa. It relates that the Madra-
king was foretold about the death of the would-be
husband of his daughter Sāvitrī. Hence he was much
grieved because of the norm that daughter is "given"
only once.[97] The Purāṇic injunction is no doubt
in harmony with the Smṛti tradition. As we have
shown above, Nārada Smṛti makes a similar statement.
The text of Bṛihannāradīya Purāṇa encourages the
performance of Yugadharmas by all the castes
(Yugadharmāḥ parigrāhyā varṇair etaiḥ yathocitam,
22, 11), but lays down a number of practices which
are stated to be forbidden by wise men in the Kali
age (iman dharmān kaliyuge varjyan āhur manīshiṇaḥ,
22.16). Among such forbidden practices in the Kali
age, the text alludes to offering again (in marriage)
to another (bridegroom), of a girl, whose marriage
was not consummated.[98] A verse of Ādi Purāṇa quoted
in Smṛti Candrikā, I, p. 221, Hāralatā, p. 15,
and Dāna-kaumudī, p. 80; disallows the remarriage
of a girl, no matter whether she was a widow or
not. A person, who had such a wife, was always
considered as impure. Dange draws our attention
to a passage of Agni Purāṇa (154.56) which allows
remarriage of a women if the husband is lost (for

many · years) is dead, has become a mendicant, is
a eunuch or has fallen low.[99] The noted scholar
has not taken into account a passage of Vishnu
Dharmottera, which is one of the major Vaishnava
Upapurānas. The text almost reproduces the verse
of Nārada Smṛiti and Parāśara Smṛiti analysed above.[100]
The evidence supplied by Vishnu Dharmottara is more
authentic than that of Agni Purāna. Hazra's analysis
shows that the text of Vishnudharmottara can not
be dated later than 500 A.D.;[101] while the text
of Agni not earlier than 800 A.D.[102] The practice
of remarriage of women under the afore-mentioned
circumstances may be dated accordingly.

Generally speaking the Dharmaśāstra tradition
favered savarṇa-marriage. Thus the Āpastamba Dharma
Sūtra[103] requires that one should marry a girl of
the same varṇa, who was not given before to another
and marriage with whom is in accordance with Śāstra
and says that by contradiction these rules *sin* is
incurred. Gautama Dharma Sūtra enjoins that one
should marry a girl of the same Varṇa.[104] Manu Smṛiti[105]
and Nārada Smṛiti[105A] state that best course is
to marry a girl of one's own caste. This is said
to be pūrva kalpa (the foremost or the best procedure).

In Purāṇa tradition, too, we come across the same practice. In this connection we may refer to Devayāni-Yayāti episode narrated in the text of Matsya Purāṇa. It is related that Yayati who was born in a royal family was hesitant to marry Devayānī, who was daughter of a brāhmaṇa.[106] The text of Vishṇu Purāṇa relates that king Sagara married Kesīnī, who was a Vidarbha princess.[107] According to Vāyu Purāṇa the five wives of king Usīnara hailed from royal families.[108] All these instances have reference to savarṇa-marriage. It may be mentioned that the text of Bṛihannāradiya Purāṇa categonically names a number of lawful practices which being considered unfavourable for the attainment of heaven and disliked by the people, have been forbidden by wise men in the kali age. Among the prohibited practices a-savarṇa-marriage finds conspicuous mention.[109]

The Purāṇa-texts like the Smṛitis are not in favour of inter-caste marriage. Thus the Āpastamba Smṛiti quoted by Udvāhatattva of Raghunandan (ed. by Jīvānanda Vol. II, p. 112) says that by marrying a girl of another caste a man incurs the sin of mahāpātaka and has to go the penance of 24 kricchras. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa[110] narrates the story of king Nābhāga who married a Vaiśya girl by the rākshasa

form of marriage and who consequently incurred sin.
Subsequently he was deprived of his share of
patrimonial sovereignty, which his son and successor
recovered. The text of Vishnudharma Purāna enjoins
that gift made to a brāmana having a Śudra-wife
becomes unproductive.[111] The Bhavishyottara Purāna
condemns those twice-born men who enjoy Śudra women
and classify them as mahāpātakin.[112]

Purānas like the Smritis are rigid about
sapinda relationship in marriage. Thus, Manusmriti
enjoins that a damsel who is neither a sapinda on
the mother's side, nor belongs to the same family
on the father's side, is recommended to twice-born
men for wedlock and conjugal union[113] (III. 5).
Almost in a similar tune the text of Vishnu Purāna
ordains that one should marry a maiden who is kin
at least five degrees remote from his mother, and
seven from his father; with the ceremonies enjoined
by law.[114] While laying down the general rule about
the propinquity (sāpindya) the text of Agni Purāna
also states that from the mother's side upto five
degrees and from the father's side seven degrees
marriage should be avoided.[115]

·Much has been said about gotra and pravara and their consideration in marriage-relationship. In a nutshell these two terms may be defined as follows. Gotra is the latest ancestor or one of the latest ancestors of a person by whose name his family has been known for generations, while pravaṛa is constituted by the sages or in some cases the remotest ancestor alone.[116] The smṛiti-tradition lays down that marriage between parties that are sagotra or sapravara is no marriage and the woman does not become the man's wife. Thus, the Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra lays down that, if a man has intercourse with a sagotra girl, he should undergo the penance of cāndrāyaṇa.[117]

As far the Purāṇa texts, we start with Vishṇu Purāṇa. It alludes to sage sage Viśvāmtra, whose descendants bear the designation of Kauśika gotra. The text lays down that marriage within this gotra is not possible.[118] Matsya Purāṇa refers to Bruhmā-Satarūpa episode and expresses surprise over the marriage within the same gotra.[119] Matsya Purāṇa as also the text of Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa ·give an exhaustive list of gotras and pravaras and lay down that marriage in the same gotra and pravara should be avoided.[120] Besides the above-mentioned popular restrictions, there are a few others of

special note. Thus according to the text of Skanda
Purāṇa, persons who are cāturvidya (versed in the
four Vedas) and those who are trividya (versed in
the three Vedas) should not intermarry.[121] The marriage
of the elder sister or daughter was desired to be
accomplished first, then the younger one should
get married. Thus, in the text of Padma Purāṇa Lakshmī
says to Vishṇu that she can not be got married to
him prior to the marriage of Alakshmī, who is elder
than her (jyeshthā).[122]

We now come to the Purāṇic references to
monogamy, polygamy and polyandry. Going back to
the dharmaśāstric tradition, we find that monogamy
was the established ideal. Thus, the Āpastamba Dharma
Sūtra declares that, when a man has a wife who is
endowed with dharma and progeny, he shall not marry
another; but if any one of the two is wanting he
may marry another before he has consecrated the
sacred śrauta fires.[123] In another context, it is
prescribed that one who abandons his (faultless)
wife should put on the skin of an ass with the hair
outside and should beg for alms at seven houses
for six months.[124] It is, however, doubtful, if
this practice was followed strictly. Thus, Deval
quoted in the Gṛihastharatnākera says that the Śudra
may have only one wife, a Vaiśya two, a Kshatriya

three, a brāhmaṇa four but a king may have as many as he desires.[125] Classical Sanskrit texts reveal that although people in general wedded a single wife, plurality of wife was not unknown. Nobles and rich men were often wedded to several wives. Thus in the Māḷatīmādhava, it is stated "Even to the extent of admitting a rival, noble ladies who have their husbands honour their spouses; the great rivers bear to the ocean the waters of many a tributary stream.[126] As regards polyandry, it has been observed on the basis of the Vedic texts like Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (12.12) and Taittirīya Saṃhitā (VI. 6.4.3; VI. 5.1.4) that in those ancient times polyandry was unheared[127] (Kane, 554). It has also been observed that the most glaring example of polyandry in Sanskrit literature is that of Draupadī[128] (Kane). In Purāṇa tradition, too, monogamy was ideal. Thus the text of Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa states that, only that person is happy who has one wife. On the other hand, a person having many wives can never be happy.[129] However, the Purāṇa-texts reveal a number of cases of polygamy. Thus the text of Vishṇu, Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa and Matsya state that prajāpati Daksha for the purpose of increasing progeny gave ten daughters to Dharma, thirteen to Kaśyapa, twenty seven to Soma, four to Arishtanemi, two to Angirā and two to Kṛiśāsva.[130]

The texts of Vishṇu, Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa describe that prajāpati Daksha had twenty four daughters through his wife Prasūti, who were married to Dharma, Sagesŗ and the manes.[131] The texts of Vāyu and Matsya relate that king Uśīnara had five wives, while king Pāṇḍu had two.[132] The texts Vishṇu and Matsya allude to sixteen thousand wives of Kṛishṇa.[133] Instances of polyandry are also available in passages of the Purāṇa-texts. Thus, Vishṇu Purāṇa relates that Mārishā had ten husbands.[134] The text of Skanda Purāṇa reveals that polyandry was prevalent among certain castes. It mentions an ābhīra woman having five husbands (pañcabhartrikā).[135] Vapu, a beautiful woman says to Indra that she is having many husbands, like an ābhīra woman.[136] In another context the text of Skanda Purāṇa relates that Sāvitrī cursed the gopakanyā Gāyatrī that she is a "censured cowherdess" (vigarhitā ābhīrī), "of no character like a prostitute" (Veśyā ṇashṭacaritā) and "having many husbands" (bahubhartrikā).[137] The most glaring example of polyandry is that of Draupadī, available in the passagese of Vishṇu and Matsya.[138] It is significant that the Draupadī episode is most explicitly housed in the Mahabharata account.[139] The text relates that Yudhishṭhira tried to justify the action on the ground of ancient practice and the

agreement of the brothers to share everything that any one of them may secure. However, Yudhishthira could forget out only two instances in support of the practice. viz. of Jaṭilā Gautamī, who had seven sages as husbands and of Vārkshī (i.e. Mārishā of the Purāṇa account noted above) who had ten Prācetasa brothers as husbands. In view of the above, many scholars are led to think that the Pāṇḍavas belonged to non-Aryan stock. Somehow, they were grafted on the Aryan stock and were regarded as relatives of the Kauravas by the editor of Mahābhārata. Kane rightly observes that, this sounds somewhat far-fetched. This practice did not get any dharmaśāstric recognition. Thus, Kumārilabhaṭṭa, as Kane notes, says that there were five Draupadīs and not one. They were married separately to the five Pāṇḍavas.[140]

*****

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civiliza-
    tion, pp. 29-30; Mahābhārata, 1, 76. 28.

2. Mahabhārata, Yatra nāryaḥ kāmācārā bhavanti,
    XII. 102, 26, svairinyastra naryo hi yatheshṭham
    Vicarantyuta, II, 32. 40.

3. anāvṛitāḥ   kila   purā   striya   āsanvarānane,
    svetaketuriti khyātaḥ putrastasyābhavanmuniḥ/
    maryādeya kritā tena dharmyā vaisvetaketunā//
    ibid, I. 4, 12.

4. Altekar, Op Cit. p. 31.

5. Vishnu Purāṇa, IV, 24.

6. bhrātā bhaginigantā pitā putrīñca vai kalau;
    Skanda Purāṇa, II, 7, 22. 45.

7. Brahma Purāṇa, 229, 17-21.

8. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1,
    p. 428.

9. M. Cole, 'Marriage, past and present', p. 10.

10. Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 31.

11. Ashi Yasta, C, X. 54.

12. ayajñiyo vā esha Yo'patnikaḥ, Taittirīya
    Brāhmaṇa II, 2, 2.6.

13. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 33.1.

14.   ardha ha vā esha ātmano Yajjāyāyā tasmādyāva-
       jjāyām na vindate naiva tāvatprajāyate asarvo
       hi tāvadbhavati atha yadaiva jāyām Vindate'thα
       prajāyate tarhi hi sarvo bhavati, Śatapatha
       Brāhmaṇa, V. 2, 1.10.

15.   jayapatyorna vibhāgo vidyate, pāṇigrahaṇaddhi
       sahatvam karmasu, Āpastamba Dharmasūtra, 11,
       6. 13. 161-17.

16.   grahītavidyo --- kuryaddāraparigraham -----
       sahadharmacāriṇīm prāpya gārhasthyam sahitastayā
       samudvaheddādātyetatsamyaggūḍham   māhāphalam,
       Vishṇu Purāṇa, II. 10. 13 ff.

17.   anukūlāṅganāsamyukta-mabhishincediti   śrutam,
       Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, IV. 14. 15.

18.   Matsya Purāṇa, 54, 24.

19.   Ibid, 142. 41.

20.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II. 4. 32. 89-104.

21.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 6, 22-23, Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa 1.5.19.

22.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 2, 6; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 1.1.6

23.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 67, 57.

24.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 55.12

25.   Matsya Purāṇa, 58. 21.

26.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, IV, 40. 93-97.

27.   Matsya Purāṇa, 146, 61-62.

28.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 75. 70.

29.   Kane, Op Cit. pp. 428-429.

30.   Manusmṛiti, IX. 28.

31.   Raghuvaṁśa, III, 30; V. 20-21.

32.   sāntānikādayo vā te Yācyamāna nirākṛitāḥ ----
      yenāsi vigataprabhaḥ, Vishṇu Purāṇa, V. 38, 38.

33.   Vishnu Purāṇa, 1, 15.8

34.   Ibid, 1, 15.90 ff.

35.   Matsya Purāṇa, 67, 25-29.

36.   padminyām   snāpayennārīm   garbho   yasyāḥ
      sravettathā/ aśokasannidhau snāyājjāto yasyāḥ
      vinaśyati//
      Agni Purāṇa, 265.3.

37.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, III, 9.11.

38.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 8. 1/2.

39.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II. 7, 172-173.

40.   Kane, Op Cit., p. 431.

41.   Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, 1, 2, 5.16

42.   buddhirūpaśīlalakshaṇasampannāmarogāmupayachhet,
      Āśvalāyana Gṛihyasūtra, 1, 53.

43.   Śankhāyana Gṛihyasūtra, 1, 56.

44.   Manusmṛiti, III, 8, 10.

45.   Ibid, III, 9.

46.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, III, 10.

47.   Padma Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 223, 17-22, 45.

48.   Skanda Purāṇa, IV, 76, 38-42.

49.   Ibid IV, 135. 6-7.

50. Kane, Op. Cit. p. 439.

51. Kane, Op. Cit. p. 440.

52. Gautam Dharmasūtra, 18. 20-23.

53. Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra, IV. l, 12, 15.

54. Kane, Op Cit. 442-443; Altekar, Op Cit., pp. 49-65.

55. Skanda Purāna, VI. 272.47.

56. Brahmavaivarta Purāna, l, 126.8.

57. Ibid, l, 72.22.

58. Ibid, l, 34.22.

59. Skanda Purāna, VI, 198. 40-41.

60. romakāle tu samprāpte somo bhunkte tu kanyakām/
rajahkāle tu gandharvā vahnistu kucadarśane//
tasmadvivāhayetkanyām yavannartumatī bhavet//
vivahastvashtavarshāyāh kanyāyāh śasyate budhaih//
Padma Purāna, Uttarakhanda, 120. 6-7.

61. Skanda Purāna, IV. 40. 40-43.

62. Brahma Purāna, 165. 7, 13-14.

63. Varshaikagunām bhāryamudvahettrigunassvayam
Vishnu Purāna, III 10. 16.

64. Āśvalāyana Grihyasūtra, 1.6,
Gautama Dharmasūtra, IV. 6-13,
Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra, I, 11,
Manusmriti, III. 21.

65. Manusmriti, III. 27-34.

66. Vishnu Purāna, III. 10.

67.   Garuḍa Purāṇa, I. 95.11.

68.   prājāpatyastathā brāhmo daivārshau cātisobhanā
      gāndharvarscāsurascaiva rākshasaśca pisācakaḥ
      ṣrātibho ghātānasceti vivahaḥ kathitā daśa
      Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 241. 35-36.

69.   sulkam aṇvapi kanyāyāḥ kaḥyāvikrayapāpakṛit.
      ibid, IV. 38.17

70.   S.A. Dange, Encyclopaedia of Purāṇic Beliefs
      and Practices, Vol. III, p. 1001, n. 3.

71.   kālakrītā krayakrītā pitridattā svayamyutā/
      nārīpurushayorevamudvāhastu caturvidhaḥ//
      kālakrītā tu veśyā syātkrayakrītā tu dāsikā/
      gāndharvodvāhitā yuktā bhāryā syātpitridaṭakā//
      samānadharmiṇī yukta bhāryā pitṛivasaṃdā/
      Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III. 4. 15. 4-5.

72.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 6. 35-47.

73.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 2. 15.

74.   Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa, I. 2.16.

75.   Matsya Purāṇa. 24. 30-32.

76.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 10. 11.

77.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II. 9.36.

78.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, V. 28.6.

79.   Ibid, III. 18.87.

80.   Kālikā Purāṇa, Chapter 1".

81.   Altekar, ọp. Cit. p. 43.

82.   Mahabhāgavata Purāṇa, Chapter 4.

82A. Kane, Op. Cit. p. 522; tvam me patistvam me bhāryetyevam kanyāvarayoḥ parasparam niyamabandhāt pitrādikartrikadānanirapekshādyo vivāh sa gāndharva ityarthaḥ/ .... evam syayamvaro'pi gāndharvavivāha eva/ Viramitrodaya on yājñavalkyasmṛiti 1.61.

83. Davībhagāvata Purāṇa Skandha III, Chapters 14-23.

84. Ibid, Skandha IX. Chapter 12-14.

85. pitroranujñāya kanyā yo gachhedvidhinā binā/ trirātroposhaṇāchhuddhistāmevodvahayettadā// jñātaḥ pitribhyām yo gatvā paroḍhām tadvināsane/ vidhavā jāyate neyam pūrvagantāramapnuyāt// Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II. 4.8. 17, 20.

86. Kālikā Purāṇa, Chapter 85.

87. Yājñavalkya smṛiti, 1.60.

88. R.C. Hazra, Studies in the Upapurāṇas, Vol. II, pp. 370, 395.

89. Kane, Op. Cit. p. 897.

90. Bhavishyottara Purāṇa, Chapter 148.

91. Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 40.

92. Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra, I. 11, 20-21.

93. kanyāvikrayiṇam brahmanna paśyedvadanam budhaḥ/ drishtvā cājñanato vāpikuryānmārtaṇḍadarśanam// Padma Purāṇa, Brahmakhaṇḍa, 24. 26.

94. Altekar, Op. Cit. pp. 151-153.

95.   Skanda Purāṇa, VII, 1, 167, 36-40.

95A. Vasishṭha Dharmasūtra, 17. 19,

      Vishnu Dharmasūtra, 15. 8-9.

      Manusmṛiti, IX. 176.

      Nāradasmṛiti (strīpumsa), V. 45.

96.   Dange, Op. Cit. Vol. III, p. 996, sakritkanyā

      pradātavyā   haranstām   cauradaṇḍabhāk;   Agni

      Purāṇa, 154. 3.

97.   samvatsareṇa kshiṇāyurbhavishyati nṛipātmajaḥ/

      sakritkanyā pradiyante cintayitvā narādhipaḥ//

      Matsya Purāṇa, 208. 13.

98.   Bṛihnnarādīya Purāṇa, IV. 20-27.

99.   Dange, Op. Cit. Vol. III, p. 996.

100. Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa, II. 87. 11.

101. Hazra, Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites and

      Customs, p. 212.

102. Ibid. p. 138; According to Kane Agni Purāṇa

      can not be dated earlier than 600 A.D. and

      later than 100 A.D. History of Dharmaśāstra,

      Vol. V, pt. II, p. 910.

103. Āpastamba Dharmasūtra, II, 6 13, 1 & 3.

104. Gautama Dharmasūtra, IV. 1.

105. Manusmṛiti, II. 12.

105A. Nāradasmṛiti (strīpumsa), V. 4.

106. Matsya Purāṇa, 30. 18.

107. Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 4.1.

108. Vāyu Purāṇa, 99. 18.

109. Bṛihannāradīya Purāṇa, 22. 13.

110. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 113. 34-36.

111. Vishnudharma Purāṇa, Chapter 49.

112. Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa, V. 48.

113. Manusmṛiti, III. 5.

114. pañcamīm mātṛipakshācca pitṛipakshācca saptamīm,
     Vishṇu Purāṇa, III. 10. 23.

115. Agni Purāṇa, 154.8.

116. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. II, pt. I,
     p. 497.

117. Baudhayāna Dharmasūtra, pravarādhyaya, p. 54.

118. Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 7.39.

119. Matsya Purāṇa, 4.2.

120. Matsya Purāṇa, 195. 202,
     Vishṇudharmottara Purāṇa, I, 111-11.

121. parasparam na vivahāscaturvidyatrividyayoḥ
     Skanda Purāṇa III, 2. 39. 18.

122. Padma Purāṇa (Brahmakhaṇḍa), 10. 12.

123. Āpastamba Dharmasūtra, II. 5. 11. 12-13.

124. Ibid, 1.10.28.19.

125. Devala quoted in Gṛihasthartnākara p. 85.

126. Mālatī Mādhava, II. 14, V. 19.

127. Kane, Op. Cit. p. 554.

128. Ibid.

129. . ekabhāryaḥ sukhī naiva bahubharyaḥ kadācana,
      Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa (Prakṛitikhaṇḍa, 6. 64).

130.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, 1.15. 103-105,
       Vāyu Purāṇa, 63. 40-42,
       Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 37. 42-44,
       Matsya Purāṇa, 5. 10-12.

131.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, 1.7. 24-27,
       Vāyu Purāṇa, 10, 25-30,
       Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 9. 50-53.

132.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 99. 18,
       Matsya Purāṇa, 48. 16.

133.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, V. 21. 5.
       Matsya Purāṇa, 70. 2.

134.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, 1. 15. 8-68.

135.   Skanda Purāna, VII. 1. 37.19.

136.   abhīrī tridaśādhiśa tathāham bahubhartrikā,
       ibid, III. 12. 10.

137.   Ibid, VI. 192. 54.

138.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 20-41,
       Matsya Purāṇa, 50. 53.

139.   Mahābhārata (ādiparva) Chapter 196.

140.   Kane, Op. Cit. 554-555.

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POSITION OF WIDOW

Before we actually take into account the Puránic passages and Puránic view of the position of the widow, it would be worthwhile to remark that the word 'Vidhavā' occurs several times in the Ṛigveda. Kane has traced this term in the following passages of the Ṛigveda; IV, 18.12, X. 18.7, X. 402 & 8.[1] The noted scholar rightly observes that these passages contain very little that is indicative of their condition in society.[2] A passage of Ṛigveda alludes to the rapid movements of the Maruts, due to which the earth trembles like a woman deprived of her husband.[3] The passage implies that widows trembled either from sorrow or from fear of molestation. Probably Winternitz is not totally wrong in drawing a dismal picture of the condition of a Hindu widow.[4] Thus, Manusmṛiti enjoys that 'a woman when her husband is dead, may, if she chooses, emaciate her body by subsisting on flowers, roots and fruits, but she should not take the name of a stranger male. Till her death she should be forbearing, observe vows, should be celibate and should hanker after that super-eminent code of conduct that is prescribed for women devoted to their husbands. On her husband's death, if a virtuous woman abides by the rule of celibacy, she goes to heaven though she be sonless as the ancient students did.'[5] The injunction of

Manusmṛiti, thus, shows that the position of the Hindu widow was miserable and her lot was most unenviable. She had not only to lead a life of perfect celibacy, but she had to act like an ascetic, being poorly fed (only once a day) and poorly clad.

As regards Purāṇic account, we start with the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa. The text contains two references of note. The first one relates to the Mārishā legend. In the chapter on marriage, we have already mentioned that, she was married to the ten Prācetasas and thus the evidence may be taken in the sense of polyandry. In the subsequent account the Purāṇa relates that she zealously worshipped Vishṇu, who, being gratified by her adoration appeared to her, and desired her to demand a boon; on which she revealed to him the wishes of her heart. "I have been a widow, lord," she exclaimed "even from my infancy, and my birth has been in vain."[6] Thus three aspects of woman's position are summed up in one and the same legend, namely; child marriage, polyandry and child widowship. The second reference is available in the syamantaka-legend. Describing the valour of Krishna, the passage relates that

"there is no one even among the immortals, whose praises are celebrated throughout the universe, who is capable of contending with the wielder of the discus, at the stamp of whose foot the three worlds tremble; whose hand makes the wives of the asuras widows."[7] In connection with the narrative of Reṇukā, the text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa relates that the widowhood is that type of misfortune, which is unbearable.[8] The texts of Matsya Purāṇa and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa relate that the life of Rati had become inauspicious after the death of her husband, Kāma.[8A] The text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa also mentions that, consequent upon her being a widow, Rati had taken off her ornaments and her hairs were disarranged.[9] There is reference to unclean clothes and disarranged hair of widows in the text of Matsya Purāṇa.[10] In another context, the text equates the widows with the poor and miserable persons.[11]

The text of Skanda Purāṇa depict a very miserable and depressing picture of the condition of a widow. She is said to be most inauspicious. It is ordained that even a glance at her should be avoided. It is said that, if a widow is seen when one is starting out, one should come back; for if one goes he is sure to die.[12] The subsequent

description is more alarming. It says that the
blessing of widows is like the hissings of poisonous
serpents; hence a householder should be afraid
of their blessings, as he should be afraid of
demonesses.[13] She is also warned to hear any
news regarding love or love-sport. It is also
said that, she should not see any beasts coupJating;
she should not sleep on a bedstead.[14] The text
of Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa ordains that a widow
should keep herself away from decoration, and
she should not look into a mirror.[15]

    In its chapter on strīdharma, the text
of Bṛihaddharma Purāṇa alludes to the duties of
women in general and to those of widows in
particular. It ordains that, the women should
serve their husbands, remain faithful to them
even after their death. They should not forsake
them under any circumstances nor should they
fast or perform any vrata without their permission.
The text categorically lays down that "A devoted
wife should follow her husband in his death.
By doing so she delivers him even from great
sins. Women have no work greater than this, because
(by virtue of this work) they enjoy pleasures
in heaven in company with their husbands for

a manvantara. A wife, who, with her mind absorbed in (the thoughts of) her husband, dies by entering the fire with a favourite thing of his, even if he died long ago, attains the same state." In too open words, the text lays down that the widows must live a highly restricted life and abstain from wearing had and clothes, sleeping on bedsteads and indulging in all other kinds of luxury. Childless widows are called avirā. There are two kinds of avirās, namely, adattā and dattā.[16]

The details of miserable condition of the widow are also available in the text of Skanda Purāṇa. The text states 'The widow is more unauspicious than all other inauspicious things; at the sight of a widow no success can be had in any undertaking; expecting one's (widowed) mother all widows are void of auspiciousness; a wise man should avoid their blessings like the poison of a snake.[17] The Kāśikhaṇḍa of the same Purāṇa lays down that the widow should always take one meal a day and never a second; or she may perform the observance of fast for a month or undergo the penance of cāndrāyaṇa. A widow who sleeps on a cot would make her husband fall (in hell). A widow should never wash her body with fragrant unguements nor should enjoy the fragrance

of sweet smelling things; she should everyday perform tarpaṇa with sesame, water and kuśa grass for her husband, his father and grandfather after repeating their names and gotra; she should not sit in a bullock cart even when about to die, she should not put on a bodice, should not wear dyed garments.[18]

Much has been said about the custom of the tonsure of widows. It is said to be of recent orign and growth.[19] The motive underlying it was to make the outward appearance of the widow in harmony with the ideal of renunciation, that she was expected to follow. Monks and nuns used to shave their heads; it was felt that widows should do the same. It was hoped that this would help in creating an ascetic atmosphere around her, so necessary for her resolution to lead a celibate life. The procedure was calculated to destroy the beauty of face; it was thought that it would incidentally afford the widow a greater protection against the unwanted attention of undesirable characters. It has been emphasized that among Jainas and Buddhists, nuns used to be shaved. The custom of the tonsure of widows seems to have been borrowed frorm this practice.[20] Reference to this practice is available in the Kāśīkhaṇḍa of Skanda Purāṇa. It states that the tying up into

a braid of hair leads to the bondage of the husband. Therefore a widow should always shave her head. It is added that, if it is not done, it is harmful to the relatives of the dead husband.[21] It is significant that the said passage of Skanda Purāna is quoted in the Madanapārijāta and other nibandhas. This shows that for sometime at least before the 14th century A.D. (when Madanaparijata was composed) tonsure of widows was in vogue. In this connection, Kane observes that how and exactly when this practice arose can not be established with certainly. That it is comparatively a later innovation can, however, be demonstrated. The noted scholar talks of the possibility of two propositions; that widows were tonsured on the death of their husbands, just as sons were tonsured, that widows were required by the texts to tonsure themselves continually from time to time till their death, though sons who had to tonsure themselves are not required to do so afterwards.[22] Kane further notes that, the advocates of this practice rely upon three Vedic passages, namely, Rigveda X. 40.2, Āpastamba Mantra Pātha 1.4.9 and Atharvaveda, 12.2.60. As regards Rigveda X.40.2, it refers to Vidhavā and probably niyoga, but there is nothing about tonsure in that verse. Āpastamba Mantra Pātha 1.5.9. Contains the word

'Vikeśi', which means a maiden with dishevelled hair. It can not mean a widow whose hair is tonsured. The passage of Atharvaveda relates to a marriage hymn. The word 'Vikeśi' used in it can only mean a girl with loosened hair. As Kane points out here it is impossible to hold that 'Vikeśi' means tonsured, as the mantra is part of the marriage hymn.[23]

We may reiterate that the passage of Skanda Purāṇa, quoted above, can not be dated earlier than 9th century A.D. and consequently custom of tonsure of widow has to be dated in this light. In this connection Altekar has referred to Vedavyāsa-smṛiti and other smrities, which recommended that if a widow does not become a Satī, she should tonsure her head. These smṛiti-texts are later than the 9th century A.D.[24]

Like custom of tonsure, that of Satī is integrated with the position of a Hindu widow. Sociologists are of the view that in prehistoric times there prevailed a belief in several societies that the life and needs of the dead in the next world are more or less similar to those in this life. It therefore became a pious duty of surviving relations to provide a dead person with all the

things that he usually needed them when alive.
especially when an important personage like a king,
a nobleman or a warrior died, it was felt that his
usual paraphernalia should be sent with him. He
would of course require his wives, horses and servants
in the next world; and it would therefore be necessary
and desirable to kill these all, and burn or busy
them.[25]

It may noted that in the great controversy
that raged at the legal prohibition of the Satī
custom by Lord William Bentinck, it was argued that
the custom had a vedic sanction. It was maintained
that the funeral hymn in the Ṛigveda refers to widow's
ascending the funeral pyre. The case, however,
could be rendered plausible only by fraudulently
changing the last word of the stanza from agre into
agneh. Altekar rightly observes that the verse in
question refers to women with their husbands living
coming forward to annoint the corpse before it was
consigned to flames, and contains no reference
whatsoever to any widow immolating herself on her
husband's funeral pyre.[26]

It has been observed that, we begin to get
stray references to the custom of Satī from about

300 B.C. The Mahābhārata, a major portion of which was composed at about this time, records only a few cases of Satī. The most important one among them is that a Mādrī. But in her case, the assembled sages try their best to dissuade from her resolve. But she did not move from her determination (1, 138. 71-72). In the Mausalaparvan of the Mahābhārata four wives of Vasudeva, namely, Devakī, Bhadrā, Rohiṇi and Mādira asended his funeral pyre (XVI. 7, 18). When the news of Krishna's death reaches Hastināpura, five of the wives, namely, Rukmiṇī, Gāndhārī, Sahyā, Haimavatī and Jāmbavatī ascend the funeral pyre without their husband's body. Satyabhāmā retires to forest for practicising penance (XVI, 7, 73-74).[27]

Coming to the Purāṇic references, we start with the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa. It states that Arjun having found the bodies of Krishṇa and Balarāma, performed for them, and the rest of the slain, the obsequival rites. The eight queens of Krishṇa, who have been named, with Rukmiṇī at their head embraced the body of Hari and entered the funeral pyre. Revati also embracing the corpse of Balarāma, entered the blazing pile, which was cool to her, happy in contact with her lord. Hearing these events Ugrasena and

Anakadundukhi, with Devakī and Rohinī Committed themselves to the flames.[28] In connection with the daughter of Kāśirāja, the text of Vishnu Purāṇa relates that she followed her husband in death and mounted cheerfully his funeral pile.[28A] In another context, the same text narrates that as a result of the curse of sage Vasishṭha, king Saudāsa was so much delusioned that he took the flesh of Brāhmaṇa, whose wife entered the flames.[29] The text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa narrates that Renukā resolved to die after she saw that her husband is dead. She did this inorder to protect her from future insults.[30] Matsya Purāṇa relates that Rati decided to die after her husband Kāma was burnt to ashes. But she changed her decision after she received necessary instructions of Śiva.[31] The texts of Vishnu, Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa relate that king Bāhu died in the neighbourhood of the residence of sage Aurva. His queen having constructed his pile, ascended it with the determination of accompanying him in death. But the sage Aurva forbade her, because she was pregnant and was bearing a universal emperor in her womb.[32] The text of Padma Purāṇa gives a detailed account of precedure of Satī. A woman committing Satī is given a holy bath, adorned with ornaments, is made to put collyrium in her eyes, flowers and sandal-paste; she is asked to wear the holy thread (maṅgala-sūtra); her feet are

decorated with lac-dye. She is required to be smiling and should give various gifts. If she had committed any sin or adultery, she is to get purified and then ascend the funeral pyre.[33] The Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa relates that Reṇukā slept in the pyre taking her husband Jamadagmi in her bosom.[34] The text of Nārada Purāṇa reveals that women having young children, being pregnant and those that have not attained the age of menstruation, or have yet to get menstruation are not allowed to commit Satī. Similarly women in their monthly period are not to commit it.[35] In the account of the 'goddess' Mṛigimukhī, there is reference to her deification in the text of Skanda Purāṇa. She is said to have been a woman with a deer's face and human body in her previous birth. When her husband died she committed Satī with him. Hence she came to be regarded as a goddess.[36] The text of Vāmana Purāṇa relates that king Jyotiṣmāna, the son of Vapuṣmāna, was practicising penance for getting a son. His wife attended on him in his austerities. Once the saptarṣis saw her and asked her why she was so emaciated. After knowing the reason they blessed the couple and asked them to return to their capital and that they would have seven sons. The queen conceived; but the king died even before the foetus was well developed. Though

prevented by the people, the queen ascended the funeral pyre of her husband to commit Satī. When both were getting burnt, a ball of flesh fell out from the burning pyre into the water (nearby) and it burst into seven parts, out of which the Maruts were born.[37] The same text further relates that in the syambhuva manvantara Savana, the son of Priyavrata died issueless. His wife Sudevā was directed by a divine voice to accompany her husband's body on the pyre. She did it so suddenly, that the king got up gaining his life and glory, and came out along with his wife. They flew into the sky, where his wife got up her 'period' of menstruation. The king had union with her on the 6th day, after they remained in the sky, due to divine grace for five days. While he was having sex with his wife, his semen fell down from the sky, and was seen by the wives of the sages. They thought that the semen that looked like the cloud to be nectar, collected it on a lotus and drank. Suddenly they were devoid of lustre and were discarded by their husbands. Later, they gave birth to seven sons, who came to be called Maruts as they were asked not to weep.[38]

As regards niyoga or levirate, it would be worthwhile to evaluate the Purāṇic references in the light of what has been said about it by early

scholars on the basis of other evidences. It has been observed that, in early societiese, a son by levirate was always preferred to a son by adoption. An adopted son pre-supposed a tremendous legal fiction, for which society was not yet ripe. A Vedic sage declares that an adoptive son born of another is no son at all. He was an absolute stranger; he had no blood of the family running in his veins. A son born of miyoga had the blood of the mother. He had of course not the blood of his father, but he had at least that of a near relative. A son by niyoga therefore resembled a real son as nearly as possible. It is for this reason that in the list subsidiary sons given in Dharmaśāstras, a son by niyoga usually occupies a second position, coming immediately next after the real or aurasa son. The custom was in fact fairly common in early times in India.[39]

As far the Purāṇas, we start with the text of Garuḍa Purana. The text reveals that niyoga was so called because of appointment of a person to procreate an issue from the wife of another person. In such cases the husband is either dead or incapable of procreation. The practice is said to have been discarded in the Kali age. Niyoga is to be had generally after the consent of the elders in the

family of the husband, and the most suitable person to be appointed for this purpose is younger brother of the husband. If he is not availablee other close relation would do. The child born would be called kshetraja; as kshetra (field) is the wife, the owner of the child is the husband proper. The man to act is to smear himself with clarified butter, and have sexual union only once every period till the conception takes place.[40] The text of Matsya Purāṇa depicts a unique case of niyoga in the account of Dīrghatamas and Sudeshṇā, the wife of king Bali. Here Bali does not appear to be unable to procreate on own wife. It relates that, the sage Dīrghatamas was son of Mamatā. He was born blind, as he was cursed to be so even as a foetus by Bṛihaspati, who had forced union with Mamatā, his brother's wife, when the latter had already a foetus from his elder brother. It is narrated that, when he grew to youth, Dīrghatamas caught a bull that came to his hermitage. The bull taught him the way to free sex. When Dīrghatamas began practising free sex with his younger brother's wife who was like a daughter-in-law to him, his relations caught him, bound him and threw him in the river. Along the course of the river, he reached the kingdom of Bali, where he was brought up by the king's servants. When the king knew that he

was the sage Dīrghatamas, he was very happy and
requested the latter to procreate on his queen
Sudeshnā: But, she did not approach the sage due
to his unpleasant appearance. Instead, she sent
her maid-servant. Dirghatamas had union with the
maid-servant, who gave birth, later, to a son who
is famous sage Kakshīvant. When the queen was asked
by the king next day, she told the truth. He again
entreated upon her to approach the sage the following
might. When she went, the sage knew the reason and
told her another method. He told her to smear his
body with curds mixed with liquorice and salt, and
to lick all parts of his body. The queen smeared
his body and licked all parts except the anus.
Consequently the son was born without anus. The
sage, however, consoled her by saying that the son
would get her all joy.[41] The same narrative is available
in the text of Brahmānda Purāna.[42]

The text of Skanda Purāna gives another account
of the practice of niyoga. It related that the practice
of niyoga was resorted to by the wives of the
Kshatriyas that were killed by Parasurāma. They
approached brāhmanas for favour, just prior to their
monthly period. The text adds that, this they did
with a view to procreating sons and not to satisfying
any sex-urge.[43] It is said that, when king Brihadbala

of Ānarta died issueless, his 105 wivese gave birth to equal number of sons, after they had sexual union with a brāhmaṇa, after taking bath in the holy kuṇḍa, known as "suputradakuṇḍa". It is narrated that one of the wives got inamoured of the brāhmaṇa and, as they were proceeding to take bath to the kuṇḍa, even on the road-side she had sex with the brāhmaṇa. The son thus born came to be known as Aṭa, as he was conceived while going by the path.[44]

Account of niyoga is available in the text of Devībhagavata Purāṇa, which alludes to the Mahabhārata episode. It relates Śantanu's marraige with Satyavatī, and the birth of Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya, Citrāṅgada's death in a fight with a gandharva of the same name; Vicitravīrya's marriage with Ambikā and Ambālikā, daughter's of the king of Kāśī, and his untimely death by consumption; Satyavatī's appointing of Vyāsa to raise children on the childless wives of Vicitravīrya, and the consequent births of Dhṛitarāshṭra, Pāṇḍu and Viduṟa.[45]

Some Purāṇa texts, however do not look to the custom of niyoga with favour. Thus the text of Bṛihaddharma Purāṇa lays down that a householder must regard his elder brother's wife as his mother

and look upon his younger brother's wife and his
sister's daughter as his own daughters, and must
not cohabit with these relatives even unwillingly.[46]
While describing good customs and usages which were
to be followed by the people, the text says that
the people of the Kali age, being given to sinful
acts were not fit for practising that dharma (law
and custom) which was meant for the people in Kṛita
age. Hence a twice-born man of the Kali age was
to avoid the following : Practice of Celibacy (as
a student) for a long period, carrying a kamaṇḍalu
(as a forest harmit or as a wandering mendicant),
slaughter of cows (in sacrifices), performance of
human and horse sacrifices, drinking of wine, sexual
union with his own brother's wife etc.[47] As already
discussed in the chapter on marriage, the text of
Bṛihannāradīya Purāṇa encourages due performance
of yugadharmas by all castes, but names a number
of lawful practices, which being considered
unfavourable for the attainment of heaven and disliked
by the people, have been forbidden by wise men in
the Kali age. Among these practices, raising of
issue by the husband's younger brother finds prominent
mention.[48]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. P.V. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1, p. 582.

2. Ibid

3. praishāmajjeshu vithureva rejate bhūmiryāmeshu yuddha yujjate subhe, Ṛigveda. 1, 87.3.

4. Winternitz, "Die Fraue", pp. 86-88.

5. Manusmriti, V. 157-160.

6. Vishnu Purāṇa, 1, 15-63.

7. Ibid, IV. 13. 85.

8. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 30. 25, 37.

8a. Matsya Purāṇa, 153, 273.
    Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, IV. 30. 37.

9. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, IV, 30. 44.

10. Matsya Purāṇa, 154. 19.

11. Ibid, 215. 61.

12. Skanda Purāṇa, II, 9, 22. 11, 12

13. Ibid, II. 9, 22. 13.

14. Ibid, II, 9, 22. 65-66.

15. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, II, 83, 94 ff.

16. Brihaddharma Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, Chapter 8.

17. amangalebhyaḥ sarvebhyo Vidhavā syādamangaḷā/
    vidhavadarśāt siddhiḥ kvāpi jātu na jāyate/
    vihāya mātaram caikam sarva mahgalavarjitā/
    tadāśishamapi prajñastya jedāśivishopamam//
    Skanda Purāṇa, Brahmāraṇyakhaṇḍa, VII, 50-51.

18.   Skanda Purāṇa, Kāsikhaṇḍa, IV, VV. 75 ff.

19.   A.S. Altekar, The Position of Women in Hindu
      Civilization, p. 159.

20.   Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 161.

21.   vidhavākabaribandho bhartribandhāya jāyate/
      siraso vapanam tasmāt karyam vidhavayā sadā//
      Skanda Purāṇa, IV. 4. 74.

22.   Kane, Op. Cit. p. 587.

23.   Kane, Op. Cit. p. 588.

24.   Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 160.

25.   Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 116.

26.   Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 117.

27.   Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 120.

28.   Vishnu Purāṇa, V. 38.

28A. Ibid, III, 18. 92.

29.   Ibid, IV. 4. 66.

30.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 30. 35-38.

31.   Matsya Purāṇa, 154. 274.

32.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, IV. 3. 33 ,
      Vāyu Purāṇa, 88. 132,
      Bahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 63. 131.

33.   Padma Purāṇa, Pātālakhaṇḍa, 102, 7-73.

34.   Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, Gaṇapatikhaṇḍa, 28. 41-43

35.   Nārada Purāṇa, 7. 52-53, 65.

36.   Skanda Purāṇa, VII. 2. 7. 24-30.

37.   Vāmana Purāṇa, 46. 42 ff.

38.   Ibid. 46, 4-22.

39.   Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 144,

      Kane, Op. Cit. p. 599 ff.

      Westermarck, A History of Human Marriage, London, 192.

40.   Garuda Purāṇa, 1, 95. 16-17.

41.   Matsya Purāṇa, 48, 42 ff; 71 ff.

42.   Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II, 3, 74. 68 ff.

43.   Skanda Purāṇa, VI, 128. 19 ff.

44.   aṭatā rājamargeṇa vipreṇa .... utpāditaḥ,

      aṭako bhupatistasmāt; Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 128, 35 ff, 48 ff.

45.   Devibhāgavata Purāṇa, Skandha, 1, Chapter 20.

46.   Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, Chapter 6.

47.   Adipurana, quoted in Smṛiti Candrikā, 1, pp. 29, 221.

48.   Brihannaradīya Purāṇa, 22, 12-16.

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WOMEN AND RELIGION

It has been observed that in the Vedic period, women enjoyed all the religious rights and privilages, which men possessed. Some of them were even authors of Vedic hymns. There are instances of women offering Vedic sacrifices all by themselves. There is allusion to a lady, named Viśvavārā, getting up early in the morning and starting the sacrifice all by herself (Ṛigveda, V. 28.2). Vedic passages reveal that presence of woman and her co-operation were absolutely necessary in religious rites and ceremonies. This naturally increased her religious value. Man could not become a spiritual whole, unless he was accompanied by his wife (Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 1, 2.5). The general belief was that gods do not accept the oblations offered by a bachelor (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V. 1, 6.10); the husband alone can not go to heaven; in the symbolical ascent to heaven in the sacrifice, he has to call his wife to accompany him on the occasion. (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa V. 2, 1.8). A son was indispensable for spiritual well-being of the life to come, and he could be had only through wife. She was thus indispensable from the spiritual and religious points of view. This circumstance was responsible for ensuring her a religious status as high as that of her husband. For this obvious reason religious prayers and sacrifices were offered

jointly by the husband and the wife. There are several references to couples waxing old in their joint worship of gods. (Rigveda, 1, 72.5; 1, 33.3; V. 53.15). The wife used to take an active and real part in family sacrifices. Like the husband, she too had to perform a special upanayana on the occasion of some sacrifices. She had her own hut in the sacrificial compound, and also her own cow to provide her with sacred milk during the sacrifice (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, X. 2, 3.1;XIV. 3. 1, 35). In the early Vedic period, the duty of chanting musically the Sāma songs seems to have been usually performed by the wife, later on it came to be entrusted to a special class of male priests called Udgātṛis (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, XIV. 3.1..35). The wife used to pound the sacrificial rice, give bath to the animal that was to be immolated and lay in bricks, when altar was to be built (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, VI. 5, 3.1; III, 8.2, 1-6). She participated with her husband in the preparation of the offering, the consecration of the fire, the offering of the oblations and the concluding ceremonies. She herself had to recite some formulae. If the husband was away on a journey, the wife alone performed the various sacrifices, which the couple had to offer jointly.[1]

Reference has been made to Indrāṇi, who proudly claims in one place that she had started some rites and rituals (Ṛigveda, X, 86.10). Gods and goddesses are usually fashioned after the human model. It is not improbable that a few lady theologians may have made some contributions to the development of the Vedic ritual. There were some sacrifices which could be offered by women alone. Some of these may be mentioned hue. Sītā sacrifice, it was intended to promote rich harvest. Rudrayāga, it was intended to secure good luck to maidens in marriage. Rudrabali, it was intended to ensure prosperity and fecundity among the cattle (Pāraskar Gṛihya Sūtra, II. 17; III, 8.10). If the co-operation of the husband was unavailable for any reason, the wife could offer the sacrifices all alone. On the morning of Rāma's installation as crown prince, Kausalyā is seen performing all alone the Svāstiyāga to ensure felicity to her son (Rāmāyaṇa, II, 20.15). She was the neglected wife and probably she felt that it would be too much to expect her husband to come to participate in the sacrifice. At that time he was as a matter of fact engaged in assuaging the wrath of his favourite wife Kaikeyī. Similar is the case of Tārā, wife of Vāli. She was performing alone the Svāstiyāga, when her husband was about to issue out to fight

with Sugrīva. This was probably because Vāli was
then too busily engaged in equipping himself to
find time to participate in wife's sacrifice. Thus,
although the normal practice was that the couple
would jointly perform the various sacrifices, yet
very often husbands used to leave the whole affair
to the exclusive charge of their wives, when they
were otherwise very busy.

There were, however, some restrictions on
the religious status of a wife who belonged to a
lower caste. Thus, Manu ordains that only the wife
of the same caste could be associated with the husband
in the sacrifices. A Śūdra wife or a wife for whom
a bride-price had been paid, was not entitled to
any religious rights and privileges. The participation
in sacrifices presupposed Vedic study. The upanayana
or Initiation ceremony of girls used to take place
as regularly as that of boys at the normal time.
The Vedic age held that Brahmcarya discipline and
training was as much necessary for girls as it was
for boys (brahma caryena, kanyā yuvānam vindate
patim, Atharvaveda, XI. 5. 18). It was apprehended
that if the most important Sanskāra of upanayana
was not performed in the case of girls, women would
be automatically reduced to the status of Śūdras;

how then could Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas be born of them (Hārīta, XXI, 20 quoted at commentary of Madhavācārya on Parāśara Smṛiti, Vol. 1, part 2, p. 48). Upanayana of women was absolutely necessary, if the cultural tradition of the different Aryan classes was to be preserved. As long as upanayan of girls was common, women used to offer morning and evening prayers as regularly as men. The Rāmāyaṇa makes specific reference to Sītā discharging this religious duty (Rāmāyaṇa, II. 87. 19). In due course of time minor religious rituals like the Jātakarma, Nāmakaraṇa, Cūḍā, etc. were originally performed just as regularly in the case of girls as they were in that of boys. When upanayana was discontinued in the case of girls, it began to be advocated that other rituals also should be permitted to them, only if they were performed without the recitation of the Vedic mantras. This position has been taken up by almost all the Smṛiti Writers.[2]

As far the Purāṇic references, we may start with Liṅga Purāṇa. It prescribes that women are not entitled to worship a _deity_ independently. They should offer worship through brāhmaṇas.[3] Nārada Purāṇa states that a Śiva-liṅga or an idol of Vishṇu worshipped by a woman should not be bowed down to. A

person who bows down to such a liṅga or idol of Vishṇu is said to go hell along with all the members of his family.[3A] When a liṅga is established and consecrated according to the proper rites, a Śūdra or woman is not allowed to touch it. Those women or a Śūdra who touch the idol are said to go to hell.[4]

The text of Skanda Purāṇa, ordains that there are six causes of fall in case of a woman or a Śūdra. These are enumerated as under : muttering of a mantra, penance, going on a pilgrimage, mastering a mantra, sacrificing and propitiating a deity directly.[5]

The text of Kūrma Purāṇa prescribes that in the case of funeral rites a woman has a place. For a departed person who is son-less, his wife is eligible to perform the funeral rites; and if the wife is not living, his brother may perform.[6] According to the text of Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, the wife comes last; and in that case funeral rites and śrāddha are to be performed without the mantras.[7] According to Matsya Purāṇa, in the event of her husband performing the śrāddha rite in the house, and when the balls of the rice are offered, the wife is enjoined to eat the middle piṇḍa, while the

proper mantra indicating conception and progeny is being recited. This is believed to ensure pregnancy and the birth of a son.[8]

The text of Agni Purāṇa reveals that women played an important past in various festivals. The touching and kicking of the Aśoka tree by a young woman seems to have been most popular.[9] Some more details regarding such women are available in the texts of Padma Purāṇa[9A] and Matsya Purāṇa.[10] They were called suvāsinī. They are mentioned especially in the contexts of vows or religious occasions. It is enjoined that after a visit to the holy place Pushkara, a gathering should be arranged, wherein suvāsinīs should be invited. Various drinks are said to be offered to them, including grape-juce mixed with bits of jaggery and wine. All suvāsinīs are to be respected and worshipped. The gifts given to them include cloth, saffron, coconut and sandal. They should be given collyrium for applying it to the eyes and sindūra to be applied at the parting of the hair on the head. In a festive occasion in respect of goddess Lalitā, suvāsinīs are enjoined to be worshipped, with the accompaniment of songs and instrumental music. They should be offered red clothes and red flowers, and sindūra should be applied to them on their heads.

Purāṇas also prescribe rituals to be observed by women for procuring progeny. For a woman who does not conceive, or for one whose children die, or who gets abortion, the following remedy is prescribed. According to one remedy seven women, having their husbands living, should be worshipped. These women should give the woman a bath.[11] Another remedy is that the woman in question should be given bath in a lake full of lotuses, or she should be given bath near the Aśoka tree.[12] A woman desirous of a son is advised to take bath in the sea.[13] If the woman fears abortion, she should be asked to eat parched rice along with rice-water; or she may be asked to lick yaṣṭimadhu, wine of grapes, honey or/and ghee.[14] A woman is forbidden to cut a Kuṣmāṇḍa (red pumpkin gourd) for fear of being unhealthy and unfortunate for the next seven births.[14]

With reference to the religious status of a pativratā, the text of Bhavishya Purāṇa relates that one who honours her husband and is chaste is pativratā; one who is also devoted to the gods and the brāhmaṇas is called Mānushī; she is said to be always pure, takes bath regularly, is of adorable odour, takes less food, is of words, is the goddess.[16] According to the text of Skanda Purāṇa lack of chastity

is one of the greatest sins that a woman can commit. Six prominent vices are mentioned in case of women. These are mentioned as under; drinking, association with evil persons, separation from the husband, going away from the house, being given to sleep anywhere, anytime and stay at other's house. An unchaste woman is termed Mahishī. In another context, this term is applied to a woman who, being a widow is unchaste; and a person who spends a night (or nights) with her is termed Mahshika. An unchaste woman is called also Vṛishalī. The term is explained thus : "a woman who leaves her Vṛisha (bull-husband) and takes another one". Seven types of Vṛishalī is are mentioned. These are as under; cāṇdālī, Bandhakī, Veśyā, a maiden that has reached menstruation, one who is deflowered and is yet unmarried, kuṭilā and sagotrā.[17]

The text of Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa ordains that a woman, sexually enjoyed by another person is not to be left. It is emphasized that in such a case she is discarded due to sexual act; but she could be purified by continuous austerity. However, she would not be allowed to cook food for the manes or for the gods, nor is she allowed to participate in worship.[18] On the other hand the texts of Skanda

Purāṇa[19] and Agni Purāṇa[20] (प्र प्र) state that women never be sexually polluted by any one; they are always pure; because every month they become pure after the monthly period.

The texts of Skanda Purāṇa,[21] Agni Purāṇa[22] and Garuḍa Purāṇa[23] lay down that women are sexually enjoyed by three gods prior to marriage; they are Soma, Gandharva and Agni. Soma gave them all purity; Gandharvas gave them blessed speech, Agni gave them 'sacrificial worthiness' (sarvamedhyatām); hence they are pure. Agni Purāṇa states that, if a woman conceives from union with a person of another varṇa, she remains impure as long as she does not release that dart. When it is released she becomes pure again after menstruation.[24]

The Purāṇas also prescribe Vratas to be observed by the women. Thus the text of Bhavishya Purāṇa[25] refer to Aśoka-vrata, in which Aśoka tree was worshipped. The tree is decorated with flags and strips of new cloth. The woman who performs this vrata was required to make her husband and his younger brother to stand by, sesame and whole grains in hand was to be offered to the tree. After this she worshipped the tree. The worship of Aśoka tree is

believed to remove all sorrows of the worshipper.[26]
A woman could also worship a golden or silver Aśoka
tree with branches studded with jewels. It was gifted
to a brāhmaṇa.[27] The same text refers to Aśūnyaśay-
anī; i.e. "non-empty bedstead." A fast and other
rites on this day are said to wipe away the possibility
of being a widow. She was required to take bath
at a river, a tank or even in own house. Having offered
pacificatory offerings to the gods and manes, she
was required to construct a small raised square
platform, on which Vishṇu and Lakshmī were established
and worshipped.[28]

    The text of Skanda Purāṇa[29] /the *prescribes* performance
of the above vrata even after the four months of
the rainy season, which ends in Kārtika. For the
next four months, i.e., Mārgaśīrsha, Pausha, Māgha
and Phālguna, the images of Viṣhṇu and Lakshmī are
to be substituted by their aspects, respectively,
Hari and Rukmiṇī; and even after four months, i.e.,
Caitra, Vaiśākha, Jyeshṭha and Āshāḍha with the
images of Varāha and Bhūmi. The Vrata, thus, comes
to be an year long ritual (sāmvatsarika). It is
emphasized that the Vrata may be performed by a
married man, a woman or even by a widow. Skanda
Purāṇa refers to another Vrata in respect of the

goddess Maṅgalā Gaurī to be performed on the bright third of Caitra. After keeping awake for the whole night, the woman who observes the vrata is to feed twelve maidens next morning. She is also to worship a brāhmaṇa-couple and give a cow and bull as gift. The reward of performing this vow is said to be the gain of fortune, issues, beauty of form etc. A maiden who performs it is believed to get a good husband.[30] The text of Bhavishya Purāṇa prescribes the Goshpadatritīyā vrata to be observed on the third (or fourth) bright of Bhādrapada. On this occasion a woman, after bath, was required to massage the horns of the cows, hooves and the tail, with flour, curds and whole grain; they should be decorated with wreaths. The observer was required to abstain from eating salt and preparations in oil and also preparations not made with the help of fire. Arghya was to be offered to cow at the cow-stall or at the entrance of the city, where the cows step in. In the morning a golden replica of a cow-hoof was to be given to a brāhmaṇa.[31]

The text of Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa refers to Gaurīvrata, also known as Kātyāyanī-Vrata. It was to be performed in Mārgasīrsha. In this vrata, the goddess was to be invoked to arrive and stay

in a jar through the duration of the vow. Alternatively an idol of Durgā could be made from sand. It should have ten hands.[32] The text of Bhavishya Purāṇa refers to a vrata on the third of Aśvina. It is termed Meghapālī tritīyā. The goddess is said to be Meghapālī. Men and women were required to join in the observation of the vow. An arghya offering of sprouted heat was to be offered to the goddess.[33] The same text enjoins that the goddess was to be honoured by respectable ladies. An image of the goddess Meghapālī was to be installed. It was to be covered with red cloth and decorated with scented powder.[34] Garuḍa Purāṇa refers to Dashtottara Pañcamī vrata, which was equivalent to Nāgapañcamī vrata, performed on fifth day of the bright half of Śrāvaṇa. It was observed both by men and women. On this occasion milk was offered to the serpents.[35] The text of Skanda Purāṇa refers to Ṛishipañcamī vrata. It was performed on the bright fifth of Bhādrapada. It is stated that this vrata was formerly observed by the wives of the sages. The speciality of the occasion is that on this day women who observe this vrata are to take only nivāra (rice growing wild, or without cultivation). The vrata is believed to bestow upon women house-hold happiness, love of the husband and son.[36]

Purāṇas also lay down the co-operation of the wives in the performance of the religious rites. In the texts of the Vāyu Purāṇa[35] and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa,[37] the act of lifting up earth by Varāha out of ocean is equated with sacrifice. It is stated that on this occasion, his wife of Varāha chhāyā also accompanied him. Both these texts allude a sacrifice performed in the naimishāraṇya. It is stated that in this sacrifice Tapa himself played the part of Yajamāna and his wife Ilā accompanied him.[38] Vāyu Purāṇa describes that, when Kaśyapa performed aśvamedha sacrifice in Pushkara, his wife Diti accompanied him.[39] Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa relates that king Sagara performed his sacrificial bath alongwith his wife.[40] Matsya Purāṇa ordains that entrance into sacrificial hall along with one's wife is auspicious.[41]

From the above account it follows that on the whole there were no doubt some religious disabilities of women. But the ideal was that husband and wife are equal and necessary partners in divine worship. The references which we have taken into account in the present note leave no room for doubt that women have done greater service to religion than men by preserving the old tradition related to Hindu religion.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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      Civilization, pp. 195 ff.

2.   Altekar, Op. Cit. p. 204.

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3A.   Nārada Purāṇa, 14. 58.

4.   Ibid, 14. 59-60.

5.   Skanda Purāṇa, V, 4. 103, 22.

6.   Kūrma Purāṇa, II, 23. 90.

7.   Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 30, 22.

8.   Matsya Purāṇa, 16. 58.

9.   Agni Purāṇa, 247, 30.

9A.   Padma Purāṇa, Sṛishṭikhaṇḍa, 29, 196-203.

10.   Matsya Purāṇa, 61, 20.

11.   Ibid, 67, 25-29.

12   Agni Purāṇa, 265, 3.

13.   Ibid, 265, 4.

14.   IBid, 302, 23.

15.   Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, II, 75, 76-77.

16.   Bhavishya Purāṇa, 28. 33-43.

17.   Skanda Purāṇa, IV, 40, 89, VII, 1, 205, 76;
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18.   Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, II, 47. 40.

19.   Skanda Purāṇa, IV. 40. 37; VII. 144. 130.

20.   Agni Purāṇa, 165. 6.

21. Skanda Purāṇa, IV. 40. 38-40.

22. Agni Purāṇa, 165. 19.

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25 Bhavishya Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa 9, 1-5.

26. Ibid, 9, 8. 12-16.

27. Ibid, 9, 9.

28. Ibid, 15, 4-13.

29. Skanda Purāṇa, II, 7, 10, 6 ff.

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31. Bhavishya Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 19, 1 ff.

32. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, II, 27, 122-126.

33. Bhavishya Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa 17, 1-5.

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35. Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1, 128, 27-26.

36. Skanda Purāṇa, V, 1, 59, 33-39.

37. Vāyu Purāṇa, VI. 22-23,

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38. Vāyu Purāṇa, II, 6; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 1, 1.6.

39. Vāyu Purāṇa, 67. 57.

40. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 55. R

41. Matsya Purāṇa, 58. 21.

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<u>STATUS OF WIFE IN RELATION TO HUSBAND</u>

It has been observed that, since Indo-Iranian times husband and wife were regarded as the joint owners of the house-hold. The Vedic word dampati etymologically means the joint owners of the house. The Avestā (Yashṭa, 15, 4) describes the husband and the wife as nmāno-paiti and nmāno pathnī, showing thereby that they were equal partners and joint owners of the common household. There is no doubt that the supreme authority was clearly vested in the husband, the wife's position was one of honourable subordination. In the Vedic and epic society wife was treated with utmost courtesy and regard. The wife was considered to be the ornament of the house (Ṛigveda, 1.66.3). The home management was under her direct charge. Her views were to prevail there (Atharva Veda. XIV. -1.43). Husband and wife were considered to be the compliments of each other.

The wife had certain duties and obligations. She must be true to her husband in her marriage vows and lead the life of an ideal pativratā. She must try her utmost to promote her husband's happiness (Mahābhārata XII. 144.20). Neither the father nor the mother, neither a son nor a friend, can do for a woman what a husband will. The help that these can give is limited, the help the husband can offer is unlimited (Rāmāyaṇa, II. 27. 6; II. 40.3). Her real

happiness is centred in her husband (Rāmāyaṇa, II. 3730). If separated from her husband, she will desire neither pleasure nor prosperity nor heaven; she will prefer death to separation from him (Mahābhārata; III. 297.53).[1]

As far the Purāṇa tradition, the ideal conduct of a house-wife is described in it in too open words. She was to be open-hearted to her husband, respectful to his brothers and sisters, devoted to his mother, affectionate towards her relations, considerate towards the servants, smiling even to her cowives, courteous to her husband's friends and hateful to his enemies. A wife who discharged all these duties, was the true pativratā. The sanctity of gods, sages and holy places is all centred in her. The world is sanctified by her existence, and there is no sin that would not evaporate by her mere presence.[2] In the Purāṇa-tradition, the relationship between the wife and the husband is particularly extolled. Thus the text of Brahma Purāṇa[3] enjoins that a girl is not singularly praised. She is praised as the means to perform religious duty. The gift of a well ornamented chaste girl to a proper bride-groom is said to be equal to the gift of the earth with

all her mountains and forests. A Vedic sacrifice could not be accomplished without the wife, says Brahmā; from half of himself he is said to have created the wife.[4]

In the Purāṇic view wife was the best adviser in respect of house-management. Thus, the text of Vishṇu Purāṇa relates that once Nidāgha invited Ribhu at his residence to take meals. On this occasion Nidāgha consulted his wife and asked her to prepare whatever could be most delicate and sweet in the house to feed the guest. The wife of Nidāgha, in obedience to her husband's commands, prepared sweet and savoury food, and set it before the brāhmaṇa.[5] The text of Matsya Purāṇa depicts the account of the Kīṭa-couple and narrates that the wife of the Kīṭa took her meals after her husband had taken his meals and likewise she took her bath after her husband had taken his bath.[6] In the same text it is enjoined that the wealth and life of the women are centred in their husbands. The husband is stated to be the very fortune of the woman.[7] The texts of Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa praise the pātivrata-dharma of the wives of prajāpati Atri.[8] In both these texts there is reference to Māndhātā's wife Bindumatī. She was regarded as a matchless lady, because of

her beauty and devotion to her husband.[9] The text of Matsya Purāṇa depicts the narrative of Sāvitrī. It is stated that she refused to take any thing from Yama except the life of her dead husband Satyavāna.[10] It is emphasized that even Yama can not stand in the way of the women devoted to their husbands.[11] The text also emphasizes that the world exists due to the noble-soūled women (devoted to their husbands).[12] Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa relates that Wife of Dwijovarma she used to offer her daily prayers for the welfare of her husband.[13]

The text of Kūrma Purāṇa alludes to a number of good qualities of wife. It is related that, for a good wife the husband alone is guru.[14] Padma Purāṇa enumerates the religious vows to be undertaken by women. It is narrated that a married woman should not undertake a vow that is not agreed to by her husband. Actually speaking there could not be any separate religious rite for a married woman from that of her husband.[15] The text of Skanda Purāṇa enjoins that a husband must be respected and adored, may he be handsome or ugly.[16] Similar view is expressed in the texts of Varāha Purāṇa[17] and Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa.[18]

The text of Śiva Purāṇa alludes to four types of a pativratā woman. The Uttamā (the best) is the one whose mind does not go to any other man even in dream, but who sees only her husband. The madhyamā (of the middle type) who looks at other man as father, brother or son depending upon their age. The nikṛishṭā (of low type) is one who does not commit adultery, thinking of her duty to her husband. The adharmā (lowest) is one who desist from committing adulting due to fear of her husband or of her family.[19]

The text of Brahmavaivarta Pūrāṇa alludes to the qualities of an excellent wife. She should get up early in the morning. She should leave her night garments. Then she should bow to her husband with joy and greet him with praise. After this, she should attend to the duties of her husband. After bath, she should wear washed clothes. Then she should worship her husband with a white flower[20]. It is added that after this she should attend to the bath of her husband wash his feet and give him washed clothes. She should arrange a seat for him and ask him to sit there. She should apply sandal-paste to his fore head and the whole body. She should place a wreath in

his neck.[21] With the mantras of Sāmaveda she should worship him. Then she should offer him a flower and sandal paste, place offerings on his feet; wave incense and a lamp with a wick; she should offer to him water made fragrant with ingredients, and mutter a stotra in front of him.[22] A real pativratā is said to worship her husband seeing Vishṇu in him; she partakes of food that is left over by him and drinks water touched by his feet.[23]

The text of Skanda Purāṇa prescribes that a pativratā should not utter the name of her husband if she desires him long life.[24] Śiva Purāṇa enjoins that after her bath she should first see the face of her husband; never of any one else; or, she may think of her husband and look to the sun.[25] Skanda Purāṇa[26] and Śiva Purāṇa[27] enjoin that a pativratā should not discard her usual decoration and personal beautification if she desires the longevity of her husband. The beautification and other auspicious decoration include the use of turmetric-powder, saffron tilaka, sindūra, collyrrium, arrangement of hair, wearing of a bodice (kūrpāsa), putting on ornaments, wearing of bracelets and ear-rings. The two texts further narrate that a pativratā should not stand alone anywhere, nor

should take bath in a naked condition. She should not sit on a mortar, a pestle, a broom-stick. Or on a grinding stone, nor should she sit on a machine, or in the door-step; she should not travel anywhere.[28]

According to Padma Purāṇa, only that wife deserves to be called pativratā who acts as a servant in work, like a prostitute at bed, mother at her husband's meals and a counsellor in his difficulties[29] [⬛⬛⬛⬛, ⬛⬛⬛]. If she has many co-wives, she worships her husbands at the beds of her co-wives where he sleeps.[30] A pativratā is advised to hear with interest anything told by her husband; and when the husband is saying or narrating something, she should not start telling her own account.[31] When invited by husband for sexual intercourse, she should eagerly consent. If the husband sings, she should be eager to hear it with joy. If the husband dances, or practises other arts, she should be eager to witness the performance. When the husband is showing something, she should be eager; she should never be near him with an excited or brooding mind. When the husband starts on a journey, she should wish him well and express auspicious words; she should not dissuade him, nor should she shed tears. When the husband

is away, she should sleep nowhere except by the side (in the same apartment) of her mother-in-law and father-in-law. Among other things to be done when the husband is away, she should never try to beautify her body, nor rub it clean when taking bath, should wear unattractive clothes, should not use flowers, wreaths and other ornamentation; she should not trim her nails, nor comb her hair, nor even wash her teeth; she should not eat betel-leaves.[32]

The text of Garuḍa Purāṇa applies the epithet proshita-bhartṛikā to a woman, whose husband has gone away on a journey. The restrictions for her are to keep herself as unattractive as possible. It is enjoined that, such a woman should discard for this period loud laughing and visiting others' houses.[33] Padma Purāṇa relates that mutually favourable attitude between the husband and the wife is the key for triple prosperity, and if the wife is favourable, what more is the purpose of heaven, and if the wife is unfavourable, where is the want of hell.[34]

The texts of Padma Purāṇa and Skanda Purāṇa, both enjoin that a virtuous woman is, indeed, Śrī, the goddess of fortune. But a woman behaving in her

own way, without heeding to what the husband says is censured.[35] Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa relates that a woman who remains faithful to her husband, and if he is the only one, is termed pativratā; with a second one, she is called kulaṭā; with a third one she becomes known as dharṣiṇi; with a fourth one she is termed puṁscalī; with a fifth one she becomes a veśyā; with the sixth, seventh and eighth man, she becomes known as yugmī; and beyond that, she becomes mahāveśyā and is untouchable.[36]

Purāṇas also lay down the duties of husband towards the wife. Thus, the text of Liṅga Purāṇa states that a woman should not be killed even if she is sinful and continues to be so; she should in fact be respected for all women should be believed to be basically pure, and born of Atri. An Ātreyī is a woman in menstruation; and to kill her is to incur the sin of brahmahatyā.[37] The text of Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa states that, the wife has to be protected; for, she has the husband himself born as an issue. If she is not protected, there is possibility of mixation of caste. Even an unchaste wife is to be protected in the same way as a characterless husband is to be respected.[38] Skanda Purāṇa relates that, one who does not behave properly

with his wife duly married to him, attains great sin, and after death (of both) he has to drink her blood in the hell.[39]

The above evidence makes clear the responsibilities of a husband and the respect and compassion with which a woman was treated. In the text of Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa wife is likened to Prakṛti, the primeval female creative power. It is enjoined that if a person worships his wife with gifts of sandal, clothes and ornaments, Prakṛti gets pleased with him, as Kṛishṇa gets pleased with the worship of a brāhmaṇa. Prakiriti is dejected and turns away if a woman is disrespected.[40] Skanda Purāṇa enjoins that houses which are cursed by good women are bound to meet ruin. Hence good women are to be always respected on festive occasions and other honourable assemblies.[41] Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa relates that a person who deceitfully leaves his wife, who really loves him, is left away by the goddess of wealth.[42] The same text relates that patnī is of three types, namely (1) Yajñapatnī, (2) guptapatnī and (3) dharmapatnī. The yajñapatnī is that who is regularly married, is righteous, steadfast in her adoration of her husband; but in essence, she is pious. The guptapatnī is that

one who is made agreeable through fear, love or gifts. She is not constant, in contrast with the first type. Thus, she is not nitya but naimittika, which means that she/made on purpose and is a kept; she is not accepted by the Vedic texts. The dharmapatnī is calm by nature and praiseworthy, being a pativratā. The yajñapatni keeps company at religious rites; hence she is termed puṇyavratā, while the dharmapatnī is termed pativratā, being a conjugal partner, always pleasing of speech, knowing various arts, soft in body and giving sexual happiness. It is laid down that, if a person wants to go away for penance, he can do so only if the third type of wife gets a son; otherwise his penance is sure to be set at naught.[43]

The Purāṇa texts in a number their narratives extol the pativratā. We start with Padma Purāṇa. It is narrated that there was a brāhmaṇa woman named Śaivyā in Madhyadeśa. Her husband was a leper. Śaivyā was a chaste woman and loved to serve her husband and obey him. Once her husband desired to a sexual union with a particular prostitute. Śaivyā accepted to fulfil his desire and went to the abode of the prostitute and requested for permission to serve her. The prostitute accepted

her as a servant; and the latter cleaned her house and its surroundings. As three days thus elapsed, the prostitude asked her why she was serving her. The pativratā communicated her husband's desire to her. Seeing her love for her husband, the prostitute consented and asked her to bring her hsuabān at night. As she carried her husband on her back in the dark, the latter's body struck a sharp pole on which the sage Māṇḍavya was set by the king. The sage cursed the leper, though the latter accidently touched him, to be turned into ashes as soon as the Sun rose in the morning. The pativratā heard the curse, and by her prowess processes she stopped the Sun from rising. The gods approached Brahmā and told him what had happened. Brahmā brought about a reconciliation, and the leper and his pativratā wife went to heaven.[44] The same narrative is available in the text of Garuḍa Purāṇa, which further adds that the name of the brāhmaṇa was Kauśika, who was staying at Pratiṣṭhāna.[45] The texts of Skanda Purāṇa and Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa relate the story of the pativratā, who is said to be the wife of one Vīraśarman, staying at Hāṭakeśvara. Her name is said to have been Dīrghikā and she is said to have been of abnormal size. None married her. Ultimately she was married to a leper.[46]

Varāha Purāṇa relates another interesting story of a pativratā woman. According to the narrative king Mithi, son of Nimi had a chaste wife named Rūpavatī. Once the king told her to clean various creepers and groves of thorns which he cut. It was a summer day and the queen was thirsty. There was no water nearby and the queen fainted. But as she fainted she looked at the Sun, with the result that the latter fell on the ground. He was pleased with the pativratā and gave her a water-jar. To the king also he offered a pair of sandal and an umbrella decorated with many ornaments. The sungod told the king that he should honour the pativratā woman. It is narrated that, since then even the god of death Yama, who is the son of the sun-god respects chaste women.[47] According to another story available in the text of Skanda Purāṇa, king Indrasena had a chaste wife. Her name was Sunandā. Once the king thought of testing her love for himself. So, when away from the capital, he sent a messanger to his wife informing her that her husband, the king (himself) died in the battle. The shock was so great for the pativratā that she died instantaneously. The same text further states that a woman who creates quarrel between a husband and

wife is said to become widow in her young age for twenty one births.[48]

The texts of Matsya Purāṇa[49] and Padma Purāṇa[50] refer to suvāsinī women, who played an important part on the occasion of festivals. They are to be accompanied with their husbands. Matsya Purāṇa relates that on festive occasion in respect of goddess Lalitā, the suvāsinīs are to be worshipped with the accompaniment of songs and instrumental music. They should be offered red clothes and red flowers and sindūra should be applied to them on their heads. According to Padma Purāṇa on festive occasions suvāsinīs should be invited along with their husbands. The women invitees on such occasions were called suvāsinīs. Various kinds of drink were offered to them, including grape-juce mixed with bits of jaggery and wine. They were also given collyrium for applying it to their eyes, betel-nuts and sindūra to be applied at the parting of the hair on the head.

We may conclude our note with the observation that the foremost duty of the wife was to honour and serve the husband. It was husband's duty to provide residence and maintenance for the wife.

There is no doubt that, as in the Mahābhārata in Purāṇas also hyperbolical descriptions of the power of the pativratā occur at every step. In these texts, names of several pativratās and the following verses dilate upon the rules of conduct for virtuous and chaste wives. The story of Sāvitrī illustrates the power of a pativratā, who wrung back even from Yama, the dread god of Death, the life of her husband.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A.S. Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, pp. 94 ff.

2. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, 35. 119, 37, see also Bālarāmayaṇa, IV. 44; Abhijñāśakuntalam, IV. 19.

3. Brahma Purāṇa, 165. 9-11.

4. Ibid, 161, 33-35.

5. Vishṇu Purāṇa, II. 15.

6. Matsya Purāṇa, 20-32.

7. Ibid, 154. 166.

8. Vāyu Purāṇa, 70. 67.
    Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa III, 8.74.

9. Vāyu Purāṇa. 88. 71-72.
    Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa III. 63. 7.

10. Matsya Purāṇa, 208. 16.

11. Ibid, 208. 3.

12. Ibid, 215. 21-22.

13. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, IV, 7. 52.

14. Kūrma Purāṇa, II, 12. 48.

15. Padma Purāṇa, Srishṭikhaṇḍa 29, 74-75.

16. Skanda Purāṇa VII, 1. 166. 64-65.

17. Varāha Purāṇa, 209. 4 ff.

18. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa II. 57, 17-19 ff.

19. Śiva Purāṇa II, 55. 74-77.

20. Bṛahma Vaivarta Purāṇa. 83, 130-131.

21. Ibid, 83. 132-133.

22. IBid, 83. 136-142.

23. Ibid, 57, 20.

24. Skanda Purāṇa, III. 2. 7.18.

25. Śiva Purāṇa, II. 54. 33.

26. Skanda Purāṇa, III, 27. 28-29.

27. Śiva Purāṇa, II. 54. 34-35.

28. Skanda Purāṇa, III. 2. 7
    Śiva Purāṇa, II. 54. 37-38.

29. Padma Purāṇa, Srishtikhaṇḍa, 47, 56

30. Ibid

31. Ibid, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 234, 49.

32. Ibid, Uttrakhaṇḍa, 234, 50-52, 59, 62, 64-66 ff

33. Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1, 95, 29-30.

34. Padma Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 223, 36-37.

35. Ibid, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 229, 38-41,
    Skanda Purāṇa, II, 1, 26. 82-83.

36. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, Prakritikhaṇḍa, 31, 4-5.

37. Linga Purāṇa, 1, 78. 17-18.

38. Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 59, 35-36, 59.

39. Skanda Purāṇa, V. 3. 121, 4-6.

40. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, 1, 30. 15-16.

41. Skanda Purāṇa, IV. 40. 57-58.

42. Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, II. 114, 56.

43.   Ibid, II, 114. 25-32.

44.   Padma Purāṇa, Srishṭikhaṇḍa, 48. 7-8.

45.   Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1. 142. 19-29.

46.   Skanda Purāṇa, VI. 135, 3-90,

       Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 16. 14-85.

47   Varāha Purāṇa, 208. 26-90.

48.   Skanda Purāṇa, VII, 3, 21, 2-8; III, 19, 22.

49.   Matsya Purāṇa, 61, 20. . ...

50.   Padma Purāṇa, Srishtikhaṇḍa, 29, 196-203.

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THE PROSTITUTES

It has been observed that prostitution has
existed from the dawn of history in all the countries
and in the absence of statistics it is difficult
to say whether it flourished more in one country
than in another or whether it existed to a greater
or lesser extent in ancient days as compared with
modern times. Attention has been drawn to the age
of Rigveda when there were women who were common
to several men, i.e., who were courtezans or
prostitutes. The text of Rigveda contains a number
of instances to this effect. At one place there
is allusion to the bright Maruts who are said to
have become associated with the young lightning,
in the same way as men become associated with a
young courtezan (I. 167.4). At another place reference
is made to a woman who gives birth in secret to
a child and leavs it aside (II. 29.1). In a number
of contexts jāra (paramour or secret lover) is spoken
of (e.g. 1, 66. 4; 1, 117. 18; 134, 3). Quite a
good number of evidences are available in the post
Vedic texts. Gautama Dharmasūtra enjoins that for
killing a woman who is a brāhmaṇi only by birth
and who subsists by harlotry no prāyascitta is
necessary but eight handful of corms may be gifted
(XII. 27). Manusmṛiti forbids a brāhmaṇa from taking
food offered by harlots. It also ordains that the

king should punish deceitful harlots (IV. 209; IV. 219; IX. 259). In the Mahābhārata courtezans are an established institution. It is narrated that a veśyā waited upon Dhritarāshtra when Gāndharī was pregnant (Ādiparva, 115. 39). Yudhishṭira sends greetings to the Veśyās of the Kauravas (udyogaparva, 30. 38). Courtezans are described as going out to welcome Krishṇa when he came on a mission of peace to the Kaurava court (udyogaparva, 86. 15). Yājñavalkysmriti divides concubines into two sorts, namely, avaruddhā (one who is kept in the house itself and forbidden to have intercourse with any other male) and bhujishyā (concubine who is not kept in the house, but elsewhere and is in the special keeping of a person). It also prescribes a fine of fifty paṇas against another person having intercourse with them (II, 290).

Nārada-Smriti enjoins that intercourse is permitted with wanton women (svairiṇī) who are not brāhmaṇa by caste, with a prostitute, a female slave, or a female not restricted by his master, if these belong to a caste lower than onself; but it is forbidden with women of upper caste. But when these very women are the kept mistresses (of a person) intercourse with them by a stranger is as much a crime as intercourse with another's wife (stripuṁsa, 78-79).

Concubines being recognized by society, the Smritis provided for their maintenance. During the life time of a person keeping a concubine, the latter has no legal right to proceed against the former. Nārada and Kātyāyana lay down that even when the property of a deceased person escheats to the king for want of heirs (except in the case of a deceased person being a brāhmaṇa) the king has first to provide for the maintenance of the concubines of the deceased of his slaves and for his śrāddha (dāyabhāga 52). The Mitāksharā says that the concubines here referred to are those called avaruddhā (and not bhujishyā) and that even the kept mistresses of a deceased brāhmaṇa are entitled to maintenance from his property.[1]

As far the Purānas, we may start with the text of Padma Purāna, which depicts an interesting story about the origin of the institution of courtezan. According to this story when the wives of gods and demons were ravished by the members of the other side they were asked to follow at the royal palace, the life of prostitutes (vēśyadharmeṇa vartadhvam adhunā nṛpamandire). They were asked to go and stay as prostitutes at temples (devakuleshu ca). They are also advised not to have love for one

particular person, if he is poor, because with them
the main purpose should be the money, irrespective
of the person being handsome or deformed (surupo
vā virupo vā dravyameva prayojanam). They are advised
not to be extremely jealous, nor should they be
of crooked thought. They are asked to accept any
one who gives the "fees" (śulka). They are also
asked to bestow various gifts on brāhmaṇas on
auspicious days. When on a Sunday falls the
constellation Hasta, Pushya or Punarvasu, they should
have auspicious bath and worship the god of love.
Each one should invite a brāhmaṇa on this day and
offer him measureful of rice, along with a jar full
of clarified butter; and should give him sexual
pleasure, thinking him to be Kāma, the god of love
(ratyartham kamadeyo'yam iti citte' vadhāṛyet).
She should give to him, as gift, the idols of Kāma
and Rati, placed on a jar filled with jaggery, in
a copper-plate covered with a silken cloth and tied
with golden thread. Along with it she should give
a vessel of bell-metal and sugar — cane (kamadevam
sapatnīkam guḍakumbhopari shitam/tāmrapatre samāropya
hemanetrapaṭāvṛitam/sukānsyabhājanopetamikshudaṇḍa-
samānvitam//).[2]

          The text of Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa enjoins
that, a prostitute is that woman who has sexual

relations with four men (nārī veśyā pratijñeyā catuspurushagāminī)[3]. According to Padma Purāṇa even though a prostitute has free sexual life, she has her own norm of fidelity and observes faithfulness to one husband (pātivratya). She is said to be a pativratā, if she has not have sexual relations with any other person, while she stays with one (yadadhīnā yadā veśeyā tadā nānyena saṅgatā/pativrateti vijñeyā tasmāttam pratipālayat).[4]

A passage of Bhavishya Purāṇa reveals the importance of a prostitute at festivals. The passage relates that on the occasion of Dīpavālī, after the banishment of Alakshami, in the morning of the new-moon-day a prostitute goes from house to house uttering the auspicious words, heralding the advent of the goddess of glory, Lakshmī. She is accompanied by other damsels, singing and merry-making (Veśyāvilāsinīsārdham svastimaṅgalakāriṇī/gṛihādgṛiham brajantī pādābhyaṅgapradāyinī).[5]

In Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, sight of a prostitute while going on an errand is said to be an auspicious sign; and actually among such auspicious things arranged, a prostitute is also included. Akrūra is said to have been made to see a prostitute, a

wreath of flower, a flag, milk and curds (Vesyām
ca pushpamālam ca patākām dadhidarśanam). Nanda
welcomed him placing a prostitute in front (kritvā
vesyām puraḥ-sarīm). It is said that, if one sees
a prostitute in dream he is sure to gain wealth
(vesyām dṛishtvā śriyam-āpnuyāt). Among good omens
is included the sight of a deer, prostitute, a drone,
camphor, and yellow garment (pumscalī-daiśane puṇyam).[6]

In Bhavishya Purāṇa, a prostitute is said
to be a must at the ritual of tying the sared
protective cord in the case of a king; and with
clay from the gate of a prostitute's house his waist
is purified (vesyājanena sahitaḥ maṅgalaśabdaiḥ
suhasitaiscinhaiḥ/rakshābandhaḥ kāryaḥ śāntidhvaninā
narendrasya//vesyādvārmṛidā rājñḥ katisaucam
vidhīyate).[7]

The text of Padma Purāṇa makes special note
of temple-girls. There is indication of such girls
dedicated to Śiva-liṅga. It is stated that a person
who kills a maiden dedicated to a liṅga goes to
hell. It is also enjoined that one may have sex
with one's own mother, if one is infatuated; but
he should not have sex with a servant-girl of Śiva
(dāsim hatvā tu liṅgasya narakān na nivartate/kāmārto

mātaram   gacchet   na   gacchechivacetikām/Śivadāsīm

tato gatvā śivasvaharaṇe tataḥ//).[8]

The   text   of   Brahmavaivarta   Purāṇa   relates
that a person in whose house there is no mother,
nor wife nor a prostitute should go to the forest
(mātā yasya gṛihe nāsti bhāryā ca puṁscalī tathā/
araṇyam   tena   gantavyamaraṇyādduḥkhadam   gṛiham//).
There is also reference to svarveśyā or divine
prostitute. She was not to be insulted. It is narrated
that, once Brahmā refused sexual gratification to
svarveśyā, Mohinī. She in return cursed him.[9]

Before we conclude our note on the present
topic, it would be worthwhile to remark in the light
of the observation made by Altekar that, when temples
of Hindu gods came to be built and endowed on a
magnificant   scale, some people began to feel in
course of time that there should be singing girls
attached to shrines to play music on the occasion
of different services and worships of the day. The
custom   of   the   association   of   dancing   girls   with
temples is unknown to Jātaka literature. It is not
mentioned by *Greek* ~~Gruk~~ writers; the Arthaśāstra, which
describes in detail the life and duties of dancing
girls, is silent about it. The custom, however,

had come into vogue by about the 3rd. Century A.D.,
for Kālidāsa refers to dancing girls of Ujjayinī
at the time of evening worship (Meghadūta, 1, 35).
Several Purāṇas also recommend that arrangements
should be made to enlist the services of singing
girls to provide vocal and instrumental music at
the time of divine services. These singing girls
were usually prostitutes. Some of the Purāṇas have
gone to the extent of recommending the purchase
of beautiful girls for their dedication to temples.
Thus the text of Padma Purāṇa states "krītā devāya
dātavyā dhīreṇaklishṭakarmaṇā/kalpakālam bhavetsargo
nṛipo vāsau mahādhanī //" (srishṭikhaṇḍa, 52. 97).
The text of Bhavishya Purāṇa goes to the extent
of saying that the best way to win Sūryaloka is
to dedicate a bevy of prostitutes to a solar temple
(veśyākadambakam yastu dadyātsūryāya bhaktitaḥ/sa
gacchetparamam sthānam yatra ṭishṭhati bhānumāna//".[10]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1.   P.V. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. II,
        pt. 1, pp. 637-638.

2.   Padma Purāṇa, Srishṭikhaṇḍa, 23, 83 ff.

3.   Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, Srīkrishṇajanmakhaṇḍa,
        75. 64.

4.   Ibid, pātālakhaṇḍa, 106, 78-79.

5.   Bhavishya Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 104. 31.

6.   Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, Srīkrishṇajanmakhaṇḍa,
        70. 25; 76. 19; 23. 41.

7.   Bhavishya Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 137. 18;
        see also Agni Purāṇa, 218. 16.

8.   Padma Purāṇa, Srishṭikhaṇḍa, 23. 129; 56. 94.

9.   Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, Srīkrishṇajanmakhaṇḍa.
        84.10.32.11 ff.

10.   Bhavishya Purāṇa, 1, 93. 67; Altekar, Position
        of Women in Hindu Civilization, pp. 182-183.

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THE PURDA-SYSTEM

It has been rightly observed that the available evidence on the point, whether Purdā system was prevalent in ancient India or not is of dubious nature, and can be manupulated to support either of the view. As in Indo-Iranian times, in the Vedic age too, women could move quite freely in society. The Vedic texts reveal that girls were educated along with boys; love marriages would take place not infrequently; youths could approach their sweethearts to win their love, both would often go together to see shows and sports. All this would not have been possible if the Purdā system had been observed in society by maidens. Attention has been drawn to Ṛigveda 1. 167. 3, which does not contain any reference to Purdā system. According to this hymn the laddle, now being dipped into the gheepot and then being taken out and brought forward to pour its contents into the sacrificial fire, is compared in this hymn to a lady, now remaining in privacy in her house, and then coming out in public to attend a meeting. During the epic period some kind of Purdā was observed in certain royal families. At the time when Sitā set out with her husband for the forest through the public thoroughfares of Ayodhyā, a regret is expressed in Rāmāyaṇa that a lady who had so far not been

seen even by the sprits of the sky should now become the object of public gaze (II. 33, 8). A similar observation occurs in the Mahābhārata also at the time of Dhṛitarāshṭra's departure of forest (XV. 16.13). The Rāmayāṇa further observes that there is no objection if women come out in public on the occasions of marriages, svyaṁvaras; sacrifices and public calamities (VI. 116.28). These references reveal that in normal life ladies were expected to remain in Purdā. It has been noticed that the above references are interpolations of a later age. The other data of the epic in the epics themselves go against the prevalence of Purdā. When Kauśalyā, Kaikeyī and Sumitrā proceed to Citrakūṭa to induce Rāma to return to Ayodhyā, they move in public without any veil. Sītā herself feels no embarrassment of a Purdā lady, when she is going out through the streets of Ayodhyā. Dhaupadī's public appearance in gambling hall presupposes an entire absence of the Purdā. Neither Kuntī nor Gāndhārī is seen observing it.[1]

Kane has traced out certain references which are of special note in this regard. Thus the text of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (12.11) says

that the daughter-in-law is abashed in the presence of father-in-law and goes away concealing away from him. According to Kane, this indicates that there was some restraint for younger women when they were in the presence of elders. He further quotes Pāṇini. The celebrated grammarian (Ashṭādhyāyi, Sūtra, III. 2.35) explains the formation of 'asūryampasyā' (who do not see the Sun) applied to 'rājadārāḥ' (queens). It is pointed out that, the reference only shows that the royal ladies did not leave the precincts of the palace and come under public gaze. In Sabhāparva (69.9) Draupadi says that, since she was seen at her svamvara by the kings, she was never seen again by them till she was brought to the assembly hall when Yudhishṭhira gambled and lost everything. It is commented that, the ladies, particularly high born ladies did not appear in public except on certain occasions; that it does not follow that they were always in veil. Kane has also illustrated references from classical Sanskrit texts. Some of them may be mentioned. In Harshacarita (IV) Rājyashrī, whom the intended bride-groom Grahavarman came to see before marriage, is described as having her face covered with a fine red cloth. In the Kādambari Patralekhā has been described as covering her face with

a veil of red cloth. In Abhijñanaśakuntalam when Śakuntalā is taken to the court of Dushyanta she is described as wearing a veil (V. 13).[2]

It is contended that, by about 300 A.D. some royal families were beginning to think it desirable that their ladies should be seen only by the select few; when moving in public they should put on a veil. The royal example was being imitated by a few families in higher and fashionable society. Thus in the Mrichchhakaṭika the courtezan was offered a veil when she was raised to the status of a respectable lady at the end of the drama. However, this view was shared by a small section of society. It appeared altogether irrational to women in general, who began to oppose it with all their might. From the Lalitavistara we learn that when Gopā, the bride-elect of the Buddha, was bethrothed to him, she was ⁄advised to wear a veil. She refused to follow the course observing that the pure in thought require no such artificial protection (Canto XVI). This instance shows that the Purdā system was receiving rational opposition from spirited ladies. It resulted in the system not becoming popular for several centuries. It may have been

prevailing in a few royal families, whose number was very small. Sculptures and paintings of the first millennium of the Christian era do not at all disclose any veils over ladies' face. The sculptures of Sanchi show that the women of the 2nd century B.C. could see a procession from the balconies of their houses without covering their faces with veils (Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, plate 1). Both at Sanchi and Ajanta we come across mixed throngs of men and women moving together in streets (Yazdani, Ajanta, part II, plate XXIV) and participating in worship at public temples (Altekar, ibid, plate II); women are however not to be seen any veils. It has been rightly pointed out that, to show a veil round the face may be difficult for a sculptor, but not for a painter. If therefore we see even married women moving in public without Purdā in Ajanta painting, the conclusion is irresistible that it was hardly much in vogue even in the higher and fashionable sections of society. It is contended that, the evidence of sculptures and paintings is corroborated by the data of Dharmaśāstra and classical Sanskrit literature. Several Smṛitis like those of Manu and Yājñavalkya lay down detailed rules about

the life of women, but they nowhere lay down that women were not to go out except when properly veiled. It has also been observed that in most of the Sanskrit dramas we do not find any trace of Purdā system. In the first Act of Abhijñana-sakuntalam the maidens do not cover their faces with veils, even when they see and converse with Dushyanta. In the fifth Act, the heroine no doubt appears with a veil, but that is because she had donned it as a protection against the dust and weather during her journey. It was not doffed by her for some time owing to her sense of bashfulness and embarassment at her first public appearance before her husband. Her veil in the fifth act therefore does not prove the existence of Purdā system. We learn from Yuan Chuang that Rājyashrī, tne widowed sister of Harsha, used to come out without a veil in her brother's court. Abu Zaid, an Arabian traveller of the early 10th century has noted that in most of the courts in India queens appeared in public without any veils. It is therefore clear that the Purdā was confined to a very small section of the ruling classes down to the 10th century A.D.[3]

Altekar further observes that, although in Hindu society as a whole there was nothing like the modern Purdā system, there were certain restrictions on the movement of women. They could go out to visit their friends and relations, but decorum required that they should not stay at their houses for the night or when their business was over. They were to observe a certain amount of reserve in the presence of strangers. They could speak with merchants and doctors and transact the necessary business, but they were to be circumspect while dealing with unknown persons (na parapurushamabhibhāsheta anyatra vaṇikpravraji-tavaidyebhyaḥ, Śankha in Aparārka on Yājñavalkya-smṛti, 1.83). IN the same connection it is pointed out by Altekar that, though there was no Purdā system, women who felt themselves to be in a rather helpless condition, would often avoid going out in public. Such was the case of widows and maidens without proper guardians, and of married women, whose husbands had gone out on a journey (krīḍam sarīrasamskāram samājotsvadarśanam /hāsyam paragṛihe yānam tyajetproshitabhartrikā// Yājñavalkya Smṛti, 1.84). In support of this Smṛti injunction evidence of Svapnavāsavadattam of Bhāsa has been cited; wherein queen Padmāvatī

observes that it was natural for Tāpasī to avoid strangers, because her husband was out on a journey. (proshitabhartṛikā parapurushadarśanam pariharatyā-ryā, Act VI).[4]

Altekar takes into account the evidence of Kathāsaritsāgara, written towards the end of the eleventh century A.D. He observes that there are hardly any traces of the Purdā in this text. In the story of Arthalobha (III. 286) there is a reference to a lady participating in mercantile business. Polygamous kings occasionally attempted to introduce some seclusion in their harems, but they were strongly and successfully opposed by their queens. In this connection the story of Ratnaprabhā has been quoted. She is shown protesting to her husband against his view that even his own friends should not enter her apartments. She points out that the strict seclusion of women is a folly produced by jealously, it is of no use whatsoever; women of good character are guarded by their own virtue and nothing else.[5]

It has been observed that, the general adoption of the Purdā system by the ruling and aristocratic families of Hindu community is

subsequent to the Muslim rule. It was accepted by Hindu society partly in imitation of the manners of the conquerors, and partly as an additional protection of the women folk. IN the Muslim ruling families the Purdā was so strict that a message had to pass through three intermediaries before it could reach the harem (JOurnal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1935, page 246). The Hindu chiefs and nobles followed the example of their overlords in ·their own harems. This is supposed to have happened almost universally in northern India, where Muslim rule and culture were in ascendancy for a long time. In the Deccan, the Muslim rule was artificial, and so the Purdā system got no footing in the Hindu society there. It was, however, introduced by the Marāṭhā rulers with a desire to render themselves as respectable as the Muslim kings whom they had supplanted. It is also noticed that there were further causes to fecilitate the general adoption of the custom at about 1200 A.D. As a rule Hindu women at this time were illiterate and inexperienced. The times were unsettled, there was a general feeling of insecurity and Hindu life and honour did not count for much in the eyes of the conquerors. The Purdā afforded some additional protection

to beautiful women while out on journey from the covetuous eyes of an unscrupulous soldiery. It was therefore welcomed by Hindu women. They did not protest against it as Ratnaprabhā, a heroine in Kathāsaritsāgara, had done before.[6]

We now proceed to evaluate the evidence of Purāṇa tradition on the present issue. We start with a passage of Vishnu Purāṇa, occurring in Krishṇa-legend. It relates that, when Krishṇa came to know that the Kālayavana was planning to invade Dwārakā, he reflected that if the Yādavas encountered the Yavana, they would be so much weakened by the conflict, that they would then be overcome by the king of Magadha, that their force was much reduced by the war with Magadha; whilst that of Kālayavana was unbroken; and that the enemy might be therefore victorious. Thus the Yādavas were exposed to a double danger. He therefore resolved to construct a citadel for the Yadu tribe, that should not be easily taken. In the proposed citadel there was provison for the employment even of women to fight and resist the yavana.[7] The passage thus reveals free movement of the women and their fighting capacity, which was not possible in a secluded

way of living. In the same legend there is reference
to Kansa's planning to kill Kṛishṇa and Balarāma
in a boxing combat by the state wrestlers Cāṇūra
and Mushṭika. On the wrestling ground there were
open and separate platforms for the different
categories of the spectators. Princes, ministers
and courtiers occupied the royal seats. Near
the centre of the circle judges of games were
stationed, whilst he himself sat apart close
by upon a lofty throne. For the ladies of the
palace, for the courtezans and for the wives
of the citizens there were separate platforms.
Among the wives of the citizens there is reference
to Devakī who appeared, mourning for her son,
whose lovely face she longed to behold even in
the hours of his destruction. Thus, the legend
has clear indication of the attendance of the
women in public gathering.[7A]

There are a number of Purāṇa-passages
revealing the free and frequent movements of
the maidens on the city-roads and their presence
in social and ceremonial gatherings. In the text
of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, there is reference to the
hermitage of Jamadagni converted into city
consequent upon the divine prowess of the kāmadhenu.

About the multitude of palaces situated in the
inner side of the city, it is narrated that their
hemispherical domes were touching the sky appearing
white in the full moon; the maidens were seen
moving in the city inconveniently due to the
weight of their hips (and not due to any cloak or
covering on their body restricting their movements).
In this connection the text also refers to the
roads of the said city; king Kārtavīrya of the
Haihaya dynasty was passing on these roads on
the occasion of his visit to Jamadagni; in his
honour the city maidens were showering flowers
on him; they were however seated in their own
mansons.[8] The description has no indication to
any artificial seclusion from public gathering.
The respected ladies of aristocratic families
had their own sense of decorum and propriety.
It was deemed proper that they should play their
part while sitting in their chambers without
coming in the open field surcharged with muddled
assemblage of the common folk.

The text of Matsya Purāṇa refers to king
Nimi, who was playing at dice along with the
maidens of the inner apartment. It is related
that sage Vasishtha was also present there on

that occasion.[9] When king Brahmadatta was coming outside along with his ministers, his wife was also there.[10] The wife of Bāṇasura was openly holding discussion on religious observances with sage Nārada.[11] The daughter of Śukrācarya, even though a grown up lady was attending upon Kacha, the favourite disciple of her father and was also receiving training from him in different branches of fine art.[12] In another context, the same text describes that on the occasion when Kṛishṇa attended to the recitation of Purāṇa narratives, his wives were also present there along with the Kuru and Vrishṇi kings.[13]

In the chapter on the position of girls, we have already made to the enlightened maidens who had cultivated proficiency in different branches of knowledge, metaphysical as well as practical. This could not have been possible in seclusion and away from the fore of the outwordly environment. Some instances may again be given considering their relevance in the context of the present note. Thus, the text of Matsya Purāṇa relates that, when Pārvatī was observing penances the sages approached her and began to put a number

of queries to her.[14] In the texts of Vishnu, Vāyu and Brahmānda, reference is made to Menā and Dhārinī. They are said to have been acquainted with theological truth (brahmavādinī); were addicted to religious meditation and accomplished in perfect wisdom.[15] Bhuvanā in the texts of Vāyu and Brahmānda is styled as 'brahmavādinī.' She had accomplished yogic practices; she had travelled throughtout the world. ~~(Ins. 81-82)~~. Aparnā, Ekaparnā and Ekapātalā are referred to in the texts of Vāyu and Brahmānda and are styled as 'brahmavādinī' and (brahmacārinī'.[16] Reference to Sannati is made in the text of Matsya Purāna; she is styled as 'brahmavādinī' because of her being occupied with her father's work.[17] Satarūpa happens to be a well/ known maiden of Purāna tradition. In the text of Matsya Purāna she is styled as 'brahmavādinī'.[17A] Vedavatī, the daughter of king Kusadhvaja figures prominently in the Purāna texts especially in the text of Devībhagavata; she was considered to be versed in the Vedic lore from her very birth; she practised penances at Pushkara and Gandhamādana mountain; ultimately she consumated /her body by means of Yogic practices.[18] Maitreyī, Sulabhā and Sāndilī, according to the text of Vishnudharmottara Purāna had attained commendable

success in Yoga.[19] Story of Pīvarī is narrated in the text of Matsya Purāṇa; she was a mind-born daughter of the manes; she was well versed in the knowledge of Yoga; she was renowned for practicising severe penances.[20]

Above we have noted the observation of Altekar that, though there was no Purdā system, women who felt themselves to be in a rather helpless condition, would often avoid going out in public. Such was the case of widows and maidens without proper guardian, and of married women whose husbands had gone out on a journey. We are citing here Purāṇic evidence in support of this observation. We have already taken into account the evidence in the chapters on status of wife in relation to Husband and position of Widow. Considering its relevance in the present context, we are citing the Purāṇa-passages again. Thus, the text of Garuḍa Purāṇa applies the epithet proshita-bhartrikā to a woman whose husband has gone away on a journey. The restrictions for such a woman are to keep herself as unattractive as possible; she should discard for this period loud laughing and visiting others, houses.[21] The text of Padma enjoins that a woman, whose husband is away should

sleep nowhere except by the side of her mother-in-law and father-in-law; she should never try to beautify her body, not rub it clean; she should not rub it clean when taking bath; she should wear unattractive clothes; she should not use flowers, wreaths and other ornamentations.[22] In its chapter on strīdharma, the text of Brihaddharma Purāṇa, imposes a number of restraints on a widow; she should live a highly restricted loke in seclusion; she should abstain from wearing red clothes, sleeping on bedsteads and indulging all other kinds of luxury.[22A]

It is, however, noteworthy that the Purāṇa tradition is not at all silent about the prevalence of Purdā system. There are at least three passages in text of Matsya Purāṇa which allude to its prevalence. It is stated that the women in the house of king Yayāti could not be seen even by Soma, Indra, Vāyu, Varuṇa and Yama.[23] Purāṇic account may be compared with 'asūryampaśyā rājadārah' occurring in the Ashṭādyayī of Pāṇini, noted above. It may be possible to argue that the present Purāṇa-passage as well other two to be illustrated subsequently are interpolations of a later age, when the Purdā system was introduced

in a few royal families. For other passages of the text as detailed above go against the prevalence of Purdā. In connection with the wife of Himavāna, the sovereign of the mountains, it is related that when came to before Nārada and offered her obeisance to the sage she had covered her face.[24] In connection with the Śaravaṇa forest where Śiva and Pārvatī were staying an enclosure of ten Yojanas had been constructed so that a male stranger may not reach there.[25] It has to be noted that those passages occur in a Purāṇa, which was subjected to omissions and commissions many a time, and as Hazra illustrates in his table, some shows of these passages may be dated during the period after the advent of the Muslims, around 1250 A.D.[26]

We may conclude our note with the remark that generally speaking Purāṇic evidence shares in common with external evidence on the point. We can not be sure about the extent of its prevalence in the common life. The system was known. But it was not wide-spread. Even in royal families it did not find general acceptance. It gained a powerful impetus with the advent of Muslim rule owing to the culture and example of the conquerors.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A.S. Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, pp. 166 ff.

2. P.V. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1, pp. 597-598.

3. Altekar, ibid, p. 173.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid, p. 174.

6. Ibid, p. 175.

7. tasmaddurgam karishyāmi Yadūnāmaridurjayam/
   striyo'pyatra yudhyeyuḥ kim punarvrishṇipuṅ-
   gavāḥ//Vishṇu Purāṇa V. 23.11.

7A. antaḥpurāṇām mañcāsca tatha'nye parikalpitāḥ/
    anye ca vāramukhyanamanye nagarayoshitām//
    ibid V. 20.27.

8. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III. 27.25. ff. ~~dyutamadiyat~~

9. nimirnām saha stribhiḥ purā ~~dyutamadiyatā~~/
   ~~dyutamadivyata~~/
   tantrāntare'bhyajagāma Vasishṭho brahmasam-
   bhavaḥ//Matsya Purāṇa, 61. 32.

10. Ibid, 21, 27.

11. Ibid, 187, 26.

12. Ibid, 25, 27.

13. Ibid, 69, 10-11.

14. Ibid, 154, 153 ff.

15.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, 1, 10.19; Vāyu   Purāṇa,
       30, 28-29; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, II. 13.30.

16.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 66.27; Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa,
       II, 2; 88.

17.   Matsya Purāṇa, 20.27.

17A.   Ibid, 4, 24.

18.   Devībhagāvata, Skandha IX. Chapter 16.

19.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, Chapter 98.

20.   Matsya Purāṇa, 15, 5-6.

21.   Garuḍa Purāṇa, 1, 95, 29-30.

22.   Padma   Purāṇa, Uttarakhanda,   234,   50-52,
       59, 62, 64-66 ff.

22A.   Bṛihaddharma Purāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, Chapter 8

23.   Matsya Purāṇa, 31. 12.

24.   Vavande gūḍhavadanā pāṇipadmakṛitāñjaliḥ,
       ibid. 154, 134.

25.   Ibid, 11. 46.

26.   R.C. Hazra, Purāṇic Records on Hindu Rites
       and Customs, pp. 176-177.

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POSITION OF MOTHER AND DIVINE MOTHERS

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It has been contended that motherhood has been the cherished ideal of every Hindu women. The birth of a son immediately heightens her status. In this connection example of Kisā Gautamī has been cited. She was not well treated for some time after her marriage. But, the things changed for better the moment a son was born to her (Therigatha, 63 and Comm.) Devout prayer is offered in the marriage ritual that the couple may be blessed with sons and grandsons (Ṛigveda, X, 85. 42). Childlessness was regarded as a great misfortune, and every effort was made to overcome it (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V, 3, 1.13). The general belief was that, what a childless woman looks on, gods do not accept. India then needed more and more men and women to develop the country, and so the ideal was of a large family. The Vedic father was anxious for ten sons; the number was reduced to eight in the Smṛiti period. The apotheosis of the mother has reached a greater height in India than anywhere else. The son could never abondon his mother, even if she was bycotted socially and religiously. He was to respect her more than father. There are no doubt passages which place the father and the preceptor higher than the mother (Manusmṛiti II. 145-146). These are, however, probably due to later sacerdotal

influence. As a matter of fact Hindu culture solved the problem of the relative superiority of these three by classing them altogether as ATIGURUS or supreme worthies (Vishṇu Smṛiti 31, 1-2).[1]

It has been further observed that the widow could not inherit the property of her husband after his death; it passed on to her sons. Yet decorum required that they should live under the protecting care of their mother after the death of their father. She was in fact their DE FACTO guardian. In fact the relations between the mother and her children were very tender; people felt old not when their hair had grown gray, but when their mother was no more (Mahābhārata XIII, 268.30). Mothers were never more unhappy than when away from their children. Kuntī was separated from her sons, when they were banished for thirteen years. In her message to Kṛishṇa at the end of that period she observes that neither widowhood nor poverty have caused her that much affliction as her separation from her dear sons (Mahābhārata, V, 90. 69).[2]

It has also been pointed out that ancient Indian history knows of no matricides. In this connection reference is made to an anecdote given in Amitārudhyāna Sūtra. It is narrated that Ajātaśatru, who wanted to kill his father by starvation, discovered that his plan was not succeeding because a step-mother of his was surreptitiously carrying him nourishment by smearing honey to her person. When he decided to kill his step-mother, his ministers remonstrated and said, 'Bad kings, 18,000 number, have killed their fathers, but we have not heard any who has killed his mother.' Upon this, Ajātaśatru gave up his plan (Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XLIX, pt. II, p. 163).[3]

It has also been commented that the only matricide known to Indian tradition is of Paraśurāma. In his case the legend is probably invented to emphasize the duty of obeying the father. It is to be noted that the first boon, which Paraśurāma asks his father after carrying out his fiendish command, is his mother's resurrection with the proviso that she should never recollect her murder (Mahābhārata, III, 117.18).[4]

Attention has been drawn to the Smṛiti tradition which contains high euology of and the reverence for the mother. Thus Gautama Dharma Sūtra (II. 56) first says that the ācārya is the highest among the gurus, while some teachers hold that the mother is the highest. The Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra prescribes that a son must always serve his mother even if she has been an outcaste, since the mother undertakes for her son numerous troublesome actions (1.10, 28.9). The Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra requires the son to maintain his mother, even though an outcaste, without speaking to her. Vasishṭha Dharma Sūtra enjoins that a father who is an outcaste may be abandoned, but a mother, though patitā, is never an outcaste to the son (13.47). Manu Smṛiti relates that the ācārya exceeds by his greatness ten upādhyāyas, the father exceeds as hundred ācāryas, a mother exceeds a thousand fathers (II, 145). Saṅkha-Likhita advise that the son should not take side (in quarrel) between his father and mother; indeed he may (if he chooses) take the side of his mother, since the mother bore him (in her womb) and nourished him; the son while living, would never be free from the debt he owes to his mother except by the performance of the Sautrāmaṇi sacrifice.

(Saṅkha-Likhita quoted in Saṁskāra Prakāśa, p. 479). The Yājñavalkya Smṛti holds that the mother is superior to guru, ācārya and upādhyāya (1.35). The Anuśāsanaparva says that the mother excels in her greatness ten fathers or even the whole earth; there is no guru like the mother (105. 14-16). The Ādiparva in its chapter 37 says that one may avert the consequences of all curses, but a mother's curse can never be averted.[5]

Coming to the evaluation of the Purāṇa-passages on the subject we start with the evidence of Vishṇu Purāṇa. The text eulogizes Devakī, who as mother, bore in her womb Kṛishṇa, the protector of the universe.[6] In another context, the text refers to the narrative of Mahābhārata, how Krishṇa dvaipāyana Vyāsa carried on the instruction of his mother for procreating issues through the wife of Vicitravīrya, who died of consumption. It is emphasized that Vyāsa did this because the order of mother can not be disobeyed.[7] In the texts of Vāyu Purāṇa and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa the wives of Kaśyapa are said to be auspicious, since they proved to be the mothers of the whole world.[8] The text of Matsya Purāṇa praises the status of motherhood of Umā,

who bore in her womb Kārtikeya.[9A] The texts of
Vāyu Purāṇa and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa enjoin that
protection of the mother is a righteous deed.[9]
Matsya Purāṇa ordains that the position of mother
excels every thing. She carrys on the son in
her womb and takes care of him. Her glory does
not diminish, even though she may be a patitā.
She can not be abandoned at any cost.[10]

The Purāṇa-texts also refer to divine
mothers, their greatness and their benevolent
character. The most common term used for them
is "mātaraḥ". The "mātaraḥ" or "mothers" are
spoken of as two and many. In one of the acts
for sorcery it is said that two "mothers" should
be employed : These two mothers are enjoined
to be prepared from the clay taken out from out
hill; and they should be installed at a mountain
or at a solitary tree or a place that has been
struck by lighting.[11]

The mothers are said to have been produced
from the tears of goddess Māheśvarī.[12] The mother
goddesses are stated to be eight in number, according
to another account being produced from each of
the main gods - Brāhmī etc.[13] According to another

calculation, based on diseases and afflictions, there are nine mothers - Mahāmārī (epidemic), Pūtanā (child-lifter), Kṛityā (the evil, sin personified), Śakunī, Revatī, Khalā, Koṭarī, Tāmasī and Māyā.[14] According to Agni Purāṇa the nine mothers are designated as follows - (1) Kuñjarī, Brahmāṇī, (2) Mañjarī Māheśwarī, (3) Vaitālī Kaumārī, (4) Kālī Vaishṇavī, (5) Ghorā Vārāhī, (6) Vetālī Indrāṇi, (7) Urvaśī Cāmuṇḍā, (8) Vetālī Caṇḍikā and (9) Jayālī Yakshiṇī.[15]

According to the Purāṇas, mothers have various names according to their types. The types are as under :

(1)   Having names of goddesses such as Brāhmī, Māhesvarī etc. This type includes names from well known mythological deities like Sauparṇī (from Suparṇā - Garuḍa; and his mother Suparṇī-Vinatā), Vaishṇavī, Vārāhī, Nārasimhī, Revatī, Jayantī etc,[16] Umā, Ambikā, Sarasvatī, Mahalakshmī, Bhagavatī.[17]

(2)   Having names from the beasts and birds like Biḍālī, Ulūkā, Kukkuṭī, Gardabhī, Krauñcā, Sarpakarṇī, Śakunī,[18] Pipīlikā.[19]

(3)   Having names of trees like Udumbarī, Aśvatthā
      Bilvā,[20] kadamba,[21] Vaṭamātaraḥ.[22]

(4)   Having names indicating fierceness and
      grotesqueness like Durmukhī, Bhīṣaṇī,
      Raudrā, Saṁhārī, Sushkakāyā, Prāṇaharā,
      Jātahārī, Nishṭhurā.[23] Aśmadaṁśā, Jvālāmukhī,
      Ayomukhī;[24] Mātaṅgī.[25]

      Two prominent classes of mothers are (1)
Gotramātaraḥ, which include Śrīmātā, Tāraṇī,
Āśāpūrti, Icchā, Ārtināśinī, Jaganmātā,[26] etc.
The other class is represented by Vaṭamātaraḥ
associated with a definite tree, i.e. Vaṭa; one
of them is called Vaṭayakshiṇī; but this group
includes the well known mothers, such as Brāhmī,
Pārvatī etc., indicating the old goddesses getting
identified with tree - worship.[27] It is said
that the Vaṭamātaraḥ, Brāhmī, Kaumārī etc. were
created by Brahmā to kill the demon Andhaka,
near a Vaṭa tree; hence they became famous by
that name.[28] There are others named Taila-mātaraḥ.[29]
Carpaṭa-mātaraḥ and Paula-mātaraḥ are two other
names applied to them, as they were invited by
Śiva to partake of Carpaṭā (capaṭī) and paula
(pūrī).[30] Taila-mātaraḥ (oil mothers) are those
who are given offering at night, for gaining
power.[31]

From what has been said above, it follows that mothers had a respectable position in the society. They were supposed to be INSIGNIA of prowess and protection. There was practice of establishing images of "Mothers" (goddesses) at various quarters of a habitat for the protection of people and for general weal, including the gain of issues. These goddesses were divine representatives of the earthly mothers; being objects of reverence, worship and honour.

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1.   A.S. Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, p. 101.

2.   Ibid, p. 102.

3.   Ibid.

4.   Ibid.

5.   P.V. Kane, History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. II, pt. 1, pp. 580-581.

6.   Vishṇu Purāṇa, V. 2, 20.

7.   Ibid, IV. 20. 58.

8.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 66, 54,
      Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 2. 55.

9A.   Matsya Purāṇa, 13. 8.

9.   Vāyu Purāṇa, 69. 107.
      Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, III, 7. 56.

10.   Matsya Purāṇa, 227, 150.

11.   Agni Purāṇa, 125, 48.

12.   Śiva Purāṇa, V, 503 ff.

13.   Varāha Purāṇa, 27, 31.

14.   Skanda Purāṇa, V. 1, 64. 8-9.

15.   Agni Purāṇa, 315. 19.

16.   Matsya Purāṇa, 178, 9 ff.
      Skanda Purāṇa, III, 2, 9, 109.

17.   Skanda Purāṇa, V, 1, 70. 40-44.

18.   Matsya Purāṇa, 178. 9 ff.

19.   Agni Purāṇa, 125, 7-13.

20.   Matsya Purāṇa, 178, 30, 69, 70.

21.   Skanda Purāṇa, III, 2, 9, 110.

22.   Ibid, V, 1, 70. 44.

23.   Agni Purāṇa, 125, 7-13.

24.   Matsya Purāṇa, 178. 30.

25.   Skanda Purāṇa, III, 2, 9, 111.

26.   Skanda Purāṇa, III, 2, 9, 103-111.

27.   Ibid, V, 1, 70.41; 43, 44.

28.   Ibid, V, 1, 37, 24.

29.   Ibid, V, 1, 34, 83.

30.   Ibid, V, 1, 34, 82-83.

31.   Ibid, V, 1, 35. 3.

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CONCLUSION : SOME OBSERVATIONS

It may be re-asserted, tht the Purāṇa-passages
relating to the position of women reveal a
reconciliÂtory picture of antiquated norms and
subsequential socio-cultural changes adhering
to the traditional technique of samupavṛimhaṇa
(augmentation) in a manner that the authoritative
character of Purāṇas should not decrease in later
times. The Purāṇa-passages seem to stick fast
to the Smṛiti-based prophetic statement that
"a time might come that their rules might become
obsolete and that if any rules framed by them
are found against the spirit of the age they
should be liberally modified or abrogated."
Cases of modification or abrogation of the
established rules are discernible in the Purāṇa-
passages. An example may be illustrated here.
Thus in conformity to the Smṛiti-tradition, Purāṇas
enumerate eight forms of marriage, namely, Brāhma,
Daiva, Ārsha, Prājapatya, Āsura, Gārdharva, Rākshasa
and Paiśāca. But the text of Skanda Purāṇa 's
shown in the chapter on marriage increases this
number to ten by adding Prātigha and Ghātana
forms. Similarly, the text of Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa
reduces the number to four unique types and
categories them under the appellation of "udvāha".
Accordingly four types of wives are enumerated,
namely, Kālakrīta, Krayakrītā, Pitṛidattā and

Svyamuta. Possible interpretation of these terms is worked out in the chapter on marriage. It would not be out of place to mention that such cases of modificatory trends can scarcely be taken in the sense of capricious imagination of the Purāṇa-author. On the other hand they tend to show that the doors of Purāṇas were open for incorporation of some obsolete customs and practices which were lying unmarked in the floating channel of the age-old tradition. It is also possible that they have an indication to the developments of the later periods, which had not received wide-spread recognition in the society.

The Purāṇa-passages probably bring out the validity of the remark that "what is not seen in the Vedic tradition is all noticed in Smṛiti tradition and what is not seen in both is available in the Purāṇa tradition." In support, two examples may be cited here. Thus the text of Śiva Purāṇa alludes to the categories of a pativratā, namely, Uttamā, madhyamā, nikṛishṭā and adhamā. Pativratā or pativrata dharma is too well known to Vedic and Smṛiti traditions, but the classification of pativratā wives or their gradation and ranking

of the kind appears to be typical of the Purāṇic injunction. Similarly, the reference of Bhavishya Purāṇa to. the mānushī category of patnī and her differentiation from the pativratā is unique in the Purāṇa-tradition. No such distinction is known to have been made in non-Purāṇic traditions.

The Purāṇa-passages also reveal that the Paurāṇikas were not unmindful to the changing circumstances. In fact, they felt the least hestitation in reframing the scope of their composition responding to the demand of the age. Thus, generally speaking scholars refer to the passages showing that the birth of daughter was considered to be an unwelcome event. But the Purāṇa-passages are suggestive of the fact that this was not the universal phenomenon. It has been pointed out in the chapter on position of girls that, Liṅga Purāṇa explains the meaning of the word 'putrī' on the lines of the etymology of the word putra that "putrī is one who saves her parents from the hell called put"; that Matsya Purāṇa relates that a daughter who is not destitute of śīla or virtue is equal to ten sons; that Padma Purāṇa enjoins that a

daughter who is possessed of śīla is auspicious and equal to ten sons; that the text of Vishṇudharma (upa) Purāṇa alludes to the laudatory narrative of a girl whose very name was Śīladhanā. In a number of cases Purāṇic view of customs and practices is presented under the camouflage of cripto - import of mythical narratives in order to give them orthodox colour and inorder that they may not appear alien to the Purāṇa-tradition. Some examples are underpinned here;

In the chapter on the position of the widows, reference has been made to the tonsure of the widows in Purāṇa-passages. A number of theories have been propounded by the scholars explaining the circumstances in which this custom was introduced in the orthodox circle. Mostly, it is emphasized that this custom was borrowed from the jainas and Bauddhas. In both the sects the nuns used to be shaved. In this connection the Kāśikhaṇḍa of Skanda Purāṇa states that typing up into a braid of hairs leads to the bondage of the husband. Therefore a widow should always shave her hed. Since the Purāṇa-passage under reference is quoted in Madanapārijāta and other nibandhas, it is

evident that the Purāṇic view on the issue had its wide-spread appeal in the early medieval and medieval periods.

In the chapter on marriage reference has been made of the fact that by about 200 A.D. popular feeling had become insistent on pre-puberty marriage of the girls, that this change was largely due to the proselytizing trends of Buddhism encouraging the institution of monks and nuns, that there was laxity of morals among nuns, that the girls had generally ceased to study any thing, that the society did not like girls to remain doing nothing; that from the time of Ṛigveda there was a mystical belief that Soma, Gandharva and Agni were the divine guardians of a girl; that this Vedic conception has been given a mythical garb in the Purāṇa-tradition enjoining that the age of marriage in case of the bride, the best is when she is eight years old, because when she shows pubic hairs, the god Soma enjoys her; at the advent of menstruation - fluid the Gandharvas enjoy her; when the breasts begin to show Agni enjoys her; hence a girl should be married prior to her reaching the

period of menstruation, and when she is eight
years of age; that the girl who begins the
'period' is called nagnikā, hence a girl should
be married when she is anagnikā to gain the
real benefit of kanyādāna.

In the chapter on the Purdā-system reference
has been made to the observation that the general
adoption of Purdā-system by the ruling and
aristocratic families of Hindu community is
subsequent to the Muslim rule, that it was
accepted by the Hindu society partly in imitation
of the manners of the conquerors and partly
as an additional protection of the women-folk;
that Purāṇa-tradition is not all all silent
about the prevalence of Purdā-system, that
there are at least three passages in Matsya
Purāṇa, which allude to its prevalence in the
royal and aristocratic families, that these
passages are later interpolations and may be
dated around 1250 A.D.; i.e., after the advent of
the Muslims.

Lastly, it may be remarked that the Purāṇa-
passages can hardly be evaluated in a correct
psycho-sociological   perspective   for   giving

any absolute judgement on the validity of the observation that the position of Hindu women had been on the whole deteriorating during the last two thousand years. It is equally difficult to decide with definite certitude on the basis of the Purāṇa-passages that most of the grievances from which the women-folk is supposed to have been suffering are more apparent than real. Still more difficult is to demonstrate that the downcast status was accorded to women by a handful pandits motivated by complacent theories and artificial norms.

It may be reasonable to talk that we are living in an era of rationalism and equality, which demands necessary reformation in the position of women. Nevertheless, the Purāṇic view in its entirely was in no way contrary to "rationality and equality" or to giving sanction to reformation in the position of women. Quite a good number of evidences have been underlined in the relevant chapters of the present dissertation. Most noteworthy of the kind is the chapter on position of mothers and divine mothrs revealing that the mothers

had a respectable position in the society and
their heavenly counterparts the mother - goddesses
were considered to be INSIGNIA of prowess and
protection and objects of reverence, worship
and honour.

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